#### SILLS CUMMIS & GROSS P.C.

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## UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

In re:

Chapter 11 Proceeding

NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, L.P.,

Case No. 21-10529 (SHL)

Debtor.

### **DECLARATION OF KAREN STEIN**

- I, Karen Stein, declare under penalty of perjury as follows:
- 1. I am a representative of Vitra, Inc. ("<u>Vitra</u>").<sup>1</sup>
- 2. I submit this Declaration in support of Vitra's motion for an order dismissing the chapter 11 case of Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P. (the "<u>Debtor</u>") pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 1112(b) or, in the alternative, converting the Debtor's case to a case under chapter 7 of the Bankruptcy Code, and granting related relief (the "<u>Motion</u>").
- 3. I am authorized to submit this Declaration on behalf of Vitra. Except as otherwise indicated herein, all facts set forth in this Declaration are based on either (i) my personal knowledge, information maintained by Vitra, or supplied to me by its representatives, employees, consultants or attorneys, or (ii) relevant documents that I have reviewed. If called upon to testify, I could and would testify competently to the facts set forth herein.
- 4. Lois Weinstein, Rita Sklar's half-sister (now deceased) made serious allegations in a 2019 lawsuit that Sklar had engaged in years of fraud, theft and gross mismanagement of the Debtor and other properties owned by Sklar and Weinstein.

Unless otherwise defined herein, capitalized terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them in the Motion.

- 5. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** is a true and correct copy of the Verified Petition (the "Complaint") in Lois Weinstein, individually and on behalf of Ninety-Five Madison Company LP v. RAS Property Management, LLC, Rita A. Sklar, individually and Rita Sklar and Steven C. Mero, as Trustees of the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Hannah Rose Gettinger, the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Ruby Hilene Sklar and the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Sadie Pearl Sklar, and Ninety-Five Madison Company, LP, Index No. 653735/2019, filed in the Supreme Court of New York, County of New York, on June 26, 2019.
- 6. The Complaint alleges that Sklar had engaged in years of fraud, theft and gross mismanagement of the Debtor and other properties owned by Sklar and Weinstein. Among the allegations are the following:
  - (a) Sklar's "response to any business situation is to seemingly be intransigent, obstructionist and bellicose", Complaint ¶ 12;
  - (b) Sklar's mismanagement and conduct has mired the Debtor in at least five major legal battles in recent years. In one, Sklar caused the Debtor to enter into a settlement with the plaintiff, breached the agreement, then engaged in legal maneuvers resulting in the expenditure of far more money in legal fees than the cost of the settlement to the Debtor, *id.* ¶ 14;
  - (c) Sklar caused her counsel to file false and frivolous pleadings in Surrogate Court,  $id. \ \ 28;$
  - (d) Sklar lacks any competence as a real estate manager, id. ¶ 29;
  - (e) Although not a licensed real estate broker, Sklar regularly holds herself out as one and demands to be paid commissions, *id.* ¶¶ 67, 68;
  - (f) Sklar's mismanagement of the Property and other properties owned by Sklar and Weinstein, and controlled exclusively by Sklar, resulted in the properties remaining "vacant and unrented and in several instances, left as vacant land", *id.* ¶ 29;
  - (g) Sklar absconded with \$4.5 million owed to Weinstein from the sale of another property in 2012, *id.* ¶ 31;
  - (h) Sklar consistently withheld information including partnership tax returns about the operation of the Debtor, id. ¶ 40;
  - (i) Sklar fraudulently induced Weinstein to assign her interest in the sale of a

- property to an entity owned and controlled by Sklar, id. ¶ 48;
- (j) Sklar altered a contract for the sale of a property after it was executed, id. ¶ 50; and
- (k) In a Section 1031 exchange transaction, Sklar invested proceeds from the sale of a property in the Debtor, rather than using the money to acquire another property while still claiming the Section 1031 exemption on tax returns. Allegedly, Sklar did this in order to support her lavish lifestyle, which is financed almost entirely from fees the Debtor pays to RAS, *id.* ¶¶ 51-58;
- 7. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** is a true and correct copy of the order entered by the Supreme Court of New York, New York County, ordering the dissolution of the Debtor.
- 8. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 3** is a true and correct copy of that certain Lease, dated as of June 18, 2016, between the Debtor, as landlord, and Vitra, as tenant.
- 9. Vitra is the U.S. subsidiary of Vitra International, A.G. ("<u>Vitra International</u>"), an internationally renowned manufacturer of high end modern furniture and accessories with production facilities and sales locations in many countries around the world. Vitra International has more than 70 years of experience in the design of modern furniture, and interior stores and showrooms to display and promote its products. It has commissioned distinguished architects and maintains a renowned museum of design in Weil-am-Rhine, Germany.
- 10. Vitra International and its subsidiaries have approximately 20 showrooms around the world, mostly in leased premises. In North America, until recently, Vitra had showrooms in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Toronto, Canada. Until December 2016, Vitra's New York showroom was located at 29 Ninth Avenue in the Meatpacking District. Vitra had a harmonious relationship with its Ninth Avenue landlord. Vitra has never been involved in litigation with any landlord, except the Debtor.
- 11. In 2016, Vitra decided to move its showroom and offices at 29 Ninth Avenue in Manhattan to the Debtor's Property, because its lease was expiring and because lower Madison Avenue, where the Premises is located, is a center for architecture and interior design firms.
- 12. On June 18, 2016, the Debtor, as landlord, and Vitra, as tenant, entered into the Lease for a street-level showroom and second floor office space in the Property. The Lease

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provided for a term of 11 years and nine months.

- 13. The Lease required the Debtor to complete the Landlord's Work within six weeks of execution, *i.e.*, by the end of July 2016. The Debtor was also required to install dunnage for four air conditioning units for use by three tenants, one of which was Vitra, and the fourth unit for the Debtor's future lobby air conditioning. Vitra was responsible for renovating the Premises and committed to spend a minimum of \$1,912,500 in hard costs of construction within nine months, which construction could not commence until the Debtor approved Vitra's plans.
- 14. This schedule immediately collapsed in the chaos created by Sklar, who insisted on imposing on Vitra her own ideas about how Vitra's showroom should be designed. Sklar threatened to keep Vitra out of the Premises unless Vitra accepted her designs, a threat she has made good on: Vitra still has not been able to complete construction or open for business at the Property nearly five years after the Lease was executed.
- 15. Four months after the Lease was signed, the Debtor still had not begun the Landlord's Work. On October 19, 2016, Vitra's project manager sent a letter demanding that Landlord's Work be completed by November 2, 2016, time being of the essence. Sklar responded with rage and threatened to "make Vitra's life miserable." At the time, however, Sklar already had in her possession architectural plans for the mezzanine demolition and a bid for the work. She kept this information secret from Vitra until after Vitra filed an action in the State Court. The Debtor refused to begin undertaking the Landlord's Work until the eve of the State Court trial, in November 2017. The Landlord's Work was soon halted because it was commenced without a permit.
- 16. Vitra had hired Gensler, a global design and architecture firm, to design the showroom. Gensler is one of the preeminent architectural firms in the world, and has provided high quality and well-recognized design services covering many millions of square feet of space to both landlords and tenants.
- 17. Between July and September 2016, Vitra and Gensler developed their plans for the showroom. On September 21, 2016, Vitra and its project manager met with Sklar to show her

the design Vitra had selected. Sklar claimed that the design wasn't prestigious enough and, in her opinion, didn't properly promote Vitra's brand. She also objected to the location of an interior stair at the right rear of the Premises. Sklar refused to allow Vitra to move forward with the design and threatened to keep Vitra from getting into the Premises on time.

- 18. Sklar also claimed that a decommissioned dumbwaiter shaft was not part of the Premises despite the fact that the Lease clearly showed that it is. She later agreed that Vitra could use the dumbwaiter shaft, but only if Vitra paid additional rent.
- 19. In or around January 2017, Sklar showed Vitra her own design for the showroom, which she called her "vision" for a "Vitra U.S. Mini Campus at 95 Madison." Sklar's design included her opinions about flooring, signage, door design and use of different areas within the Premises. On January 31, 2018, Sklar expressed her views as to how the back wall of the showroom should look, and proposed that Vitra rent additional space in the basement, for an additional rent of \$201,150 per year. Sklar even suggested that Vitra should look at the interior staircase of a building on East 73 Street as an example she was fond of.
- 20. Vitra spent hundreds of thousands of dollars preparing four different sets of plans for the showroom, but Sklar rejected them all because they did not comport with her vision of how the Premises should look.
- 21. Sklar also compelled Vitra to pay exorbitant rates for electricity during this time. The Lease provides that electricity will be supplied by the Debtor through submeters installed by Vitra, using Landlord's electrical contractor, and that Vitra would pay for its actual consumption and *pro rata* share of any taxes as additional rent. However, Vitra could not install the submeters because Sklar refused to approve its own electrical contractor's scope of work. In December 2016, Sklar wildly over-billed Vitra for electricity retroactively at the rate of \$12,105.75 per month. That amounted to \$12.15 per square foot per year for space that was unoccupied and without lighting, except construction string lights. At that time, the flat rate for electricity on a commercial lease for occupied space was no more than \$3.50 per square foot per year. On that basis, electric charges for a fully occupied premises would amount to \$3,517.50 per month. Vitra

paid the fraudulent invoice under protest as Sklar made it clear that she refused to proceed without payment.

- Debtor. The Debtor responded with voluminous comments, and rejected both sets. Though Vitra had paid its rent, the Debtor had not even begun its required construction that was supposed to be finished in July 2016, and the project was at a standstill. In April 2017, Vitra withheld its rent and the Debtor served a Notice of Default. On May 1, 2017, Vitra commenced an action in the State Court for a "Yellowstone" injunction. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 4** is a true and correct copy of the complaint in *Vitra Inc. v. Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P.*, Index No. 655408/2019, filed in the Supreme Court of New York, County of New York County, on September 18, 2019.
- 23. After several conferences before the State Court, Vitra was directed to have its professionals prepare a new set of plans. The Debtor would have the opportunity to submit comments, and then the parties and their professionals would appear in court. On May 12, 2017, Vitra submitted its third set of plans. The Debtor issued its objections. In June 2017, the parties and their professionals appeared in court. Despite lengthy negotiations, no resolution of the Debtor's objections was reached.
- 24. At the next conference, the State Court suggested mediation, and recommended three mediators, one of whom was Stephen G. Crane, J.S.C. (ret.) of JAMS, an esteemed retired judge. After consultation, the parties agreed to mediate before Justice Crane, which mediation was unsuccessful.
- 25. Trial was then scheduled for December 5 and 7, 2017. On December 5, 2017, with the encouragement of the State Court, the parties entered into new settlement discussions. Negotiations continued on December 5 and 6, and before the State Court on December 7.
- 26. Despite the Lease having been executed twenty one (21) months prior, the Debtor had still failed to start Landlord's Work, the dunnage, or approve Vitra's plans. On December 7, 2017, Vitra and the Debtor entered into the Settlement, which the State Court approved.

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- 27. Sklar was present at the hearing, and stated under oath that she understood the Settlement, had no questions about it, voluntarily agreed to it, and entered it of her own free will, without coercion. The Settlement was intended to compensate Vitra for the Debtor's months of obstruction and more importantly to provide a timetable that would finally enable Vitra to take possession of a completed showroom. The Settlement provided a rent credit to Vitra in the sum of \$506,250; approved Vitra's plans and required the Debtor to sign off on permit applications within three days of submission; created a mechanism to resolve the electricity dispute; resolved the dumbwaiter issue in Vitra's favor; provided for timetables and contractor selection for the elevator work and for building an ADA-compliant entrance ramp; set April 15, 2018 as the deadline for completion of the Landlord's Work and dunnage; provided for a rent abatement if those deadlines were not met; and provided a deadline for Vitra to complete its renovation of the Premises based on the completion of Landlord's Work.
- 28. After entering into the Settlement, Vitra discovered the Debtor had been in discussions with the Landmarks Preservation Commission with respect to the Property since, at least, October 2017. On February 5, 2018, the LPC designated the Building as a landmark. Sklar knew of the LPC's interest for months, but concealed this fact both from the State Court and Vitra. The Property's landmark status added an additional layer of regulatory approval, and construction delay, because the New York City Department of Buildings cannot issue building permits for work affecting the landmarked elements of the Building unless and until the LPC approves the work plans.
- 29. On March 22, 2018, the Debtor locked Vitra out of the Premises. The Arbitrator ordered the Debtor to restore Vitra to possession, which it did on March 29, 2018.
- 30. At a hearing before the Arbitrator in April 2018, Vitra raised significant issues relating to the LPC, including the documents that would comprise the newly-required application to the LPC, especially the exhibits reflecting the entryway. By the end of the hearing, Vitra and the Debtor agreed on the exhibits to the application, and it was agreed that the Debtor would submit them to the LPC with Vitra's representative present. However, Sklar unilaterally altered

the exhibits after the hearing and presented them to the LPC without Vitra's representative present and without informing the Arbitrator.

- 31. Vitra was therefore compelled to seek further relief from the Arbitrator. Vitra sought various forms of relief, including termination of the Lease or, in the alternative, the appointment of a receiver. Vitra claimed, among other things, that neither the Landlord's Work nor the dunnage had been completed, and Vitra was therefore entitled to a complete rent abatement.
- 32. On June 18, 2018, the Arbitrator issued the First Interim Award. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 5** is a true and correct copy of the First Interim Award.
- 33. On March 10, 2019, the Arbitrator issued the Third Interim Award. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 6** is a true and correct copy of the Third Interim Award.
- 34. By the end of October 2018, the initial approval from the LPC and the Department of Buildings permit needed to start construction were issued, but Sklar continued to obstruct Vitra from building out the showroom. She refused to approve subcontractors or to allow Vitra's contractor and subcontractors to access parts of the Property outside Vitra's Premises. After a series of conference calls, the Arbitrator requested Vitra's and the Debtor's counsel to stipulate to a set of procedures that could be used to normalize construction access and the process to facilitate that access. An agreement was not reached, however, and, on November 13, 2018, Vitra submitted a proposed order to the Arbitrator and the Debtor submitted a counterproposed order on November 19, 2018.
- 35. In the meantime, the Debtor and Sklar continued their obstruction efforts at the LPC. Although the First Interim Award approved Vitra's plans for the entrance to the Premises, and ordered the Debtor to submit Vitra's plans to the LPC, the Debtor did not comply. Instead, the Debtor submitted an application to the LPC with a cover letter seeking to undermine the First Interim Award by arguing in favor of its own plan, which the Arbitrator had rejected. The cover letter did not inform the LPC of the First Interim Award. Vitra submitted the First Interim Award to the LPC upon learning of the Debtor's actions.

- 36. On November 22, 2018, the Arbitrator signed Vitra's form of order (the "November 22 Order") with only a few revisions. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 7** is a true and correct copy of the November 22 Order.
- 37. The Debtor sought reconsideration of the November 22 Order, arguing that it contravened provisions of the Lease and Settlement. On February 24, 2019, the Arbitrator issued the Second Interim Award. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 8** is a true and correct copy of the Second Interim Award.
- 38. The Debtor continued to obstruct Vitra's renovations. Among other things, the Debtor obstructed Vitra's subcontractors who were installing two condenser units on the dunnage, running conduit from the condenser units to Vitra's second floor premises, and installing the fire alarm system. On March 12, 2019, the Arbitrator held a hearing to consider the Debtor's misconduct. Sklar did not appear at the hearing, but Debtor's counsel confirmed that this work was approved.
- 39. The following day, Sklar refused to allow the rigging subcontractor to use the freight elevator to transport its rigging equipment to the second floor. On March 13, 2019, the Arbitrator ordered the Debtor to allow this subcontractor to use the freight elevator to move its rigging equipment to install the two 750-pound air conditioning units to the courtyard roof. The Debtor and Sklar ignored the order.
- 40. On April 10, 2019, after the Debtor and Sklar refused basement access to Vitra's contractor and subcontractors for two days in violation of the Settlement and November 22 Order, the Arbitrator ordered the Debtor to provide, and not interfere with, such access. On the same day, the Arbitrator appointed a temporary receiver (the "Receiver") to exercise the Debtor's authority with respect to the renovations that Vitra had been attempting to complete since the Lease was signed in 2016.
- 41. On April 15, 2019, the Arbitrator issued an additional order directing the Debtor to provide Vitra access to the freight elevator and threatening significant monetary sanctions for any violations. The Arbitrator wrote that he had "leaned over backwards to accommodate the

[Debtor's] legitimate needs which was met with continuous misbehavior, distortion of facts and bad faith deprivation of the benefits of the bargain that [Vitra] is legally entitled to expect." In response to this order, the Debtor sought the Arbitrator's disqualification based on an allegation of gender bias, which relief was denied by JAMS, the Supreme Court, and the First Department on appeal.

- 42. On July 2, 2019, the Arbitrator entered the Fifth Interim Award. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 9** is a true and correct copy of the Fifth Interim Award.
- 43. The Debtor and Sklar sought to remove the Receiver on several occasions and refused to honor the award appointing the Receiver. For example, in the Receiver's Affirmation submitted in the Arbitration dated July 6, 2020, she wrote: "Under the [Amended Fifth Interim] Award, I should have the right to direct employees and manage permits but Landlord has interfered with my independent exercise of this authority. Landlord interferes with access to the Building and causes its employees to ignore my directions."
- 44. On August 29, 2019, the Arbitrator entered an Order directing the Debtor to file a permit on the New York Department of Buildings' website within two business days or face a monetary sanction of \$25,000 per day. The Debtor did not file the permit until twenty one (21) days after the Arbitrator's deadline. Consequently, on January 7, 2020, the Arbitrator awarded Vitra \$525,000 in monetary sanctions, which award the Supreme Court upheld, and a money judgment was entered in Vitra's favor. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 10** is a true and correct copy of the January 7, 2020 award.
- 45. Most recently, on February 16, 2021, the State Court held oral argument on various motions in the State Court lawsuit. During that argument, the court expressed frustration that the Debtor had failed to pay the Receiver, despite the Debtor's obligation to do so under the Arbitrator's awards. Ultimately, the court gave the Debtor a period to time to pay the Receiver and, failing that, Vitra would have to pay her and then seek to hold the Debtor in contempt. The court stated, "but if [Vitra] is left holding the bag here, you know, I think Mr. Laplaca [Debtor's counsel], you should advise your client that this will now be a violation of a very specific court

order, and failure to comply with it is, shall we say, not a good idea."

- 46. The Lease required Vitra to provide the Debtor with a \$285,000 security deposit. Vitra paid the security deposit contemporaneously with executing the Lease in 2016.
- 47. After Vitra's disputes with the Debtor arose, Vitra's counsel asked Debtor's counsel at which bank its security deposit was held and for confirmation that it was in a trust account in accordance with New York law. The Debtor refused to provide this information or confirm that the security deposit was held in trust. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 11** is a true and correct copy of correspondence between Vitra's and the Debtor's counsel.
- 48. More recently, after Vitra garnished the Debtor's account at Rhinebeck Bank as part of its efforts to levy on its judgment, the Debtor's counsel advised Vitra's counsel that Vitra's security deposit was part of the monies that had been garnished, and demanded that Vitra replenish the security deposit. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 12** is a true and correct copy of correspondence between Vitra's and the Debtor's counsel.
- 49. Vitra's security deposit is not the only security deposit the Debtor may have unlawfully taken. In a recent lawsuit by Tellas Ltd., a former tenant in the Property, filed in the State Court, it is alleged that the Debtor failed to return a \$239,094.96 security deposit. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 13** is a true and correct copy of the complaint in *Tellas Ltd. v. Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P.*, Index No. 650652/2021, filed in the Supreme Court of New York, County of New York, on January 28, 2021.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the

United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct

Dated: April 6, 2021

Karen Stein

## **EXHIBIT 1**

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SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK COUNTY OF NEW YORK

LOIS WEINSTEIN, individually and on

behalf of the Partners of NINETY-FIVE

MADISON COMPANY LP,

: Index No.

Petitioner

: VERIFIED PETITION

- against -

RAS PROPERTY MANAGEMENT, LLC,
RITA A. SKLAR, individually and RITA
SKLAR and STEVEN C. MERO as Trustees
of the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Hannah Rose
Gettinger, the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Ruby
Hilene Sklar and the Exempt Issue Trust
FBO Sadie Pearl Sklar; and NINETY-FIVE
MADISON COMPANY, LP,
Respondents.

. .....X

To the Supreme Court:

The petition of LOIS WEINSTEIN respectfully shows:

- 1. Petitioner Lois Weinstein is a resident of the State of New York and is a resident of New York County.
- Respondent RAS Property Management, LLC ("RAS") is a limited liability company organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York with an office at 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY.
- 3. Respondent Rita A. Sklar ("Sklar") is a resident of the State of New York and is the sole member of RAS.
- 4. Respondent's RITA SKLAR and STEVEN C. MERO are Trustees of the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Hannah Rose Gettinger, the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Ruby Hilene Sklar and the Exempt Issue Trust FBO Sadie Pearl Sklar each of which, upon information and belief, owns a beneifical interest in NFMC -- possibly up to 36%.

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- 5. Respondent Ninety-Five Madison Company, LP ("NFMC") is a limited partnership organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York and is the owner of real property known as, and located at, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.
  - 6. RAS is the general partner of respondent NFMC.
- 7. According to K-1's filed by NFMC, Petitioner has a 38% interest as a limited partner in NFMC, although, Petitioner may only hold an 18.5% interest and such K-1s may be fraudulent.
- 8. Upon information and belief, RAS holds or controls less than 50% of the ownership of NFMC.
- 9. As shall be detailed, it has become critical for the interests of the Limited Partners, and even Rita Sklar herself, that Sklar be divested of any managerial authority over 95 Madison Avenue, and sadly, by virtue of Sklar years of unchecked fraud, theft and gross mismanagement, there is no alternative but that NFMC be dissolved and its principal asset sold.
  - 10. It is possible that Sklar is suffering from dementia or another mental disorder.
- 11. As will be shown, Sklar is completely incapable of managing the affairs of NFMC. Yet she refuses to cede control to professional management.
- 12. Her response to any business situation is to seemingly be intransigent, obstructionist and bellicose.
- 13. For the past year, Sklar's power has been propped-up by her new counsel Robert Laplaca, who files frivolous and bad faith at Sklar's command. Through Laplaca and his

firm, Sklar has even sued her prior counsel who had attempted to represent her interests professionally and who apparently reached a departing of ways over Sklar's refusal to heed their advise and counsel, as well as her refusal to pay them.

- 14. As will be shown, Sklar has mired NFMC in at least five major legal battles.
- 15. Petitioner only became award of these issues in connection with an action Petitioner was forced to commence in late 2015 against Sklar when Sklar took \$4.5 million owed to Petitioner out of the 2012 sale of real property they owned jointly in Queens.
- 16. What has been uncovered is an absolutely shocking record of fraud, tax fraud, deceit, breach of fiduciary duties, gross negligence and incompetence, oppressive and unfair dealings toward the other limited partners of FNMC,
- 17. Sklar effectively controls NFMC, employing herself and, upon information and belief, paying herself (or RAS) substantial sums to manage NFMC.
- 18. Sklar and your Petitioner are half-sisters. In 1970, their mother Hilda Weinstein died leaving to her husband and three daughters, Lois, Rita and Arlene, a portfolio of real estate holdings that Hilda Weinstein had inherited from her father, Louis Shulsky.
- 19. The most valuable of the properties inherited by Sklar and petitioner was an office building located at 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY.
- 20. After a long and costly battle in the Surrogate's Court, Sklar was able to disinherit and buy-out her sister Arlene, and to gain control over Petitioner's property as a cotrustee with Petitioner's uncle Lawrence Weinstein.
- 21. In or about June 1982, Sklar and Lawrence Weinstein created a partnership to hold 95 Madison Avenue. The partnership was called 95 Madison Avenue Company.

- 22. In or about 1988, when Petitioner was 34, a 38 percent interest in 95 Madison Avenue Company was transferred to her.
- 23. In or about 2012, Madison Avenue Company elected to become a Limited Liability Partnership under the New York Limited Partnership law and became NFMC.
- 24. Under the restated partnership agreement, defendant RAS, a limited Liability Company wholly owned by Sklar, became the general partner of NFMC.
- 25. Since her mother's death, Sklar has taken autocratic control over 95 Madison Avenue as well as the other properties which she and Petitioner inherited from their mother.
- 26. Sklar has consistently lied to Petitioner with respect to a property in Flatbush Brooklyn which was specifically left to Petitioner in her mother's will, falsely representing (1) that Petitioner owned that entire property when in fact, there is another entity that own half of the property (upon information and belief Sklar has never sought to have the other owner contribute to the property taxes or any other expenses related to the property) and (2) Sklar continues (to this day) to control the property by keeping it in the testamentary trust which, under the will of Hilda Weinstein which established the trust, was to be dissolved and distributed to Petitioner on her 30th birthday (Petitioner is now about 65 years old and the property is still in the trust). Sklar has refused to deed this property to Petitioner and has necessitated litigation in the Surrogate's Court with respect to the Estate of Hilda Weinstein.
- 27. In connection with the Surrogates court litigation Sklar is currently in violation of an order from the Surrogate to account to Petitioner, and contempt proceedings have been commenced.

- 28. It will also be shown that in such proceeding, Sklar caused her new counsel Laplaca to file false and frivolous papers claiming that Petitioner lacked the mental capacity (although no such claim was asserted with respect to Petitioner's mental state in connection with the numerous documents Petitioner was directed to sign in connection with the various other transfers subject of other claims). Under threat of sanctions, counsel withdrew the objection.
- 29. In addition to her probable personality disorders, Sklar also completely lacks any competence as a real estate manager. Under Sklar's mismanagement the properties inherited from Hilda Weinstein, and controlled exclusively by Sklar, have over the years remained vacant and un-rented and in several instances, left as vacant land.
- 30. As a result of Sklar refused to rent any of the commercial properties, NFMC and the other holdings generally operate at a loss and although the portfolio has significant value, it cannot be mortgaged due to a lack of sufficient income.
- 31. The situation is now a crisis level because, even with the \$4.5 million, Sklar stole from Petitioner, there will be insufficient funds to pay the real estate tax bill coming due in June, 2019.
- 32. Due entirely to Sklar's incompetence and her intransigence, in a litigation with the major tenant -- an entity called Vitra, Inc. -- NFMC has just received a serious adverse ruling, awarding the prime tenant an abatement of rent of over \$900,000, a rent credit of more than \$500,000 and an award of its legal fees.
- 33. Vitra signed a lease to rent a portion of the first floor and the second floor over three years ago. Sklar has actively and without any rational justification has stood in the tenant's way of completing its renovation which is still not complete as a result.

34. Sklar has even unlawfully changed the locks on the tenant's space and locked

them out of possession.

- 35. The arbitrator, retired Supreme Court Justice Steven Crane, initially described Sklar's actions as "frustrating behavior" which was "flagrantly unlawful" and "bereft of common decency or legal justification".
- 36. The level of Sklar's obstructionism in approving and reviewing the tenant's work permits apparently recently has reached such a stage that Justice Crane entered an order appointing a receiver to take over the responsibilities of the Landlord with respect to the construction.
- 37. Petitioner is advised that Sklar and her counsel's response to this ruling is to seek to have Justice Crane disqualified and his ruling overturned -- not on any actual legal basis -- but on the notion that because he referred to Sklar as a "woman" that he must be sexist and therefore decided against her.
- 38. I am advised that instead of presenting the actual record of the proceedings that might shed negative light on the history Sklar's misconduct in her dealings with the tenant, Laplaca attached scholarly articles about "sexism" to his frivolous and bad-faith papers to overturn.
- 39. It is respectfully submitted that if a receiver is not appointed in this proceeding to protect and preserve the interests of the limited partners of NFMC, to take over the management of 95 Madison Avenue from RAS and Sklar, to discharge Laplaca, and to seek to lease some portion of the vast vacant office space pending this dissolution proceeding, irreparable harm will be suffered by all the owners of the NFMC.

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40. Sklar has sought to hide her deficits as a real estate manager by withholding material information about the operation of NFMC from its limited partners. By way of example, RAS refuses to provide to the limited partners of NFMC any partnership tax returns.

- 41. As stated above, because Sklar, likely due to mental issues, refuses to lease the commercial properties she and Petitioner inherited or cede control to anyone else; the only apparent source of income to her is to steal from her limited Partners and to abuse her obligations as a fiduciary.
- 42. In 2012, Sklar realized that without a significant influx of cash she would be unable to continue to live her lavish lifestyle and was in actual danger of losing 95 Madison Avenue.
- 43. In or about 2012, Sklar advised Petitioner that they should sell a property they jointly owned in Queens -- a rental property located and known as 1625 Putnam Avenue and 1635 Putnam Avenue, Queens NY (the "Putnam Properties") Putnam Avenue, Queens, NY.
- 44. As a result of Sklar's mismanagement and sever psychological issues, the Putnam Properties had not generated income, but by virtue of the phenomenal increase in real estate values, a buyer was located who was willing to pay \$9,300,000 for the Putnam Properties.
- 45. In 2012, Sklar did not advise petitioner that NFMC was in dire need of an infusion of funds. She did however, represent to Petitioner who had just lost her job as a travel agent, that were the Putman Properties sold, petitioner would receive her share of the sale proceeds.

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- 46. On or about March 6, 2012, utilizing a power of attorney dated March 1, 2012 from Petitioner, Sklar sold the Putnam Properties for the sum of \$9,300,000.
- 47. Upon information and belief, no portion of the sales proceeds has been distributed to Petitioner (other than approximately \$800,000 paid to the US. Treasury and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance and several checks totaling approximately \$70,000).
- 48. Upon information and belief, at the sale, Sklar, fraudulently induced Petitioner to assign her and Sklar's individual interest in the contract of sale to an entity called Madison Exchange, LLC ("Madison").
- 49. Although the contract was assigned for technical purposes, the actual recorded deed bears the names Rita A. Sklar and Lois M. Weinstein as grantees in their individual capacity as sellers. As previously alleged, Petitioner's signature was written by Sklar utilizing a power of attorney.
- 50. Upon information and belief, at some point subsequent to the actual execution of the contract of sale, Sklar "doctored" the sales contract, to add the words "d/b/a Kinder Realty Associates" to the sales contract. This "d/b/a" designation however was not contained on the deed recorded on March 19, 2012 and there is no indication that the sellers were any persons other than Sklar and Weinstein as individuals.
- 51. Upon information and belief, Sklar was seeking unlawfully to evade paying capital gains taxes on the sale of the Putnam Properties, and attempted to do so by purporting to do a "1031 Exchange" whereby the capital gains from the sale of one parcel of investment property through a "Qualified Intermediary" would be rolled into the purchase of another qualifying investment property within a certain time frame.

- 52. In order for the U.S. Treasury to recognize the transfer, certain rules and procedures have to be followed.
- 53. In procuring Petitioner's signature on the Exchange Agreement, Sklar concealed her intentions and did not adequately or truthfully advise Petitioner of the purpose of the 1031 exchange.
- 54. Petitioner was not represented by counsel at the time she executed the Exchange Agreement, the contract of sale of the Putnam Properties, or any other documents pertaining to the sale of the Putnam Properties.
- 55. Upon information and belief, in the months after the sale of Putnam Properties, Madison informed Sklar that they would have to return the sales proceeds because Sklar and Petitioner had not identified a proper replacement property.
- 56. Upon information and belief, Sklar never had any intention of finding an actual qualifying replacement property, since the hidden purpose of the sale was to generate cash for NFMC and not to re-invest in a new property (which is what the 1031 Exchange was intended by Congress to be used for).
- 57. Upon information and belief, Sklar represented to Madison that she wished to invest the proceeds of the sale into NFMC.
- 58. Upon information and belief, because Sklar and Petitioner already owned interests in NFMC such prior ownership violated the 1031 exchange rules, therefore 1031 exchange could not be performed to defer the payment of capital gains taxes utilizing that property.
- 59. Thus, upon information and belief, Madison advised Sklar that the funds needed to be returned to the sellers.

60. Upon information and belief, in or about April 2013 defendant Sklar arranged to have the approximately \$9,000,000 refunded from Madison be deposited into an account at the Safra National Bank maintained in the name of an entity called Kinder Realty Associates ("Kinder") a general partnership jointly owned by Sklar and Petitioner, but over which Sklar exclusively exercises total control.

- 61. Sklar fraudulently induced Petitioner to execute a wire transfer instruction to wire the funds being held by Madison to the Kinder bank account.
- 62. Upon information and belief, Sklar actively concealed her intention of depriving Petitioner of her share of the refunded proceeds after they were deposited into the Kinder bank account.
- 63. Upon information and belief, in reporting the sale of Putnam Properties to New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, Sklar signed and caused to be filed a Partnership Payment Filing Fee Form which falsely and fraudulently claimed that Kinder had actually owned an interest in the Putnam Properties (when it did not and had never). The form also falsely and fraudulently stated that the proceeds of the sale of the Putnam Properties represented income of the partnership (rather than to Petitioner and Sklar as individuals).
- 64. Upon information and belief, for years, defendant Sklar caused her accountants to claim losses on property that Petitioner and Sklar owned individually as tax losses for Kinder in spite of the fact that Kinder does not own the properties in question.
- 65. Upon information and belief, defendant Sklar had for years mismanaged defendant NFMC, keeping the building it owns under-occupied.

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66. Specifically, of the 150,000 square feet of office space available for rental, RAS has only rented less than 25,000 square feet.

- 67. Sklar (RAS), despite this appalling vacancy rate, does not list the properties with brokers, instead, Sklar pretends that she has an actual real estate broker's license and purports to list the office space at 95 Madison Avenue, herself. There are no active listings. There is no record of Sklar having an active real estate broker's license.
- 68. Indeed, notwithstanding the lack of a license, Sklar has on numerous occasions demanded a commission on the sale of the Putnam Properties and insisted that Petitioner pay those sums to Sklar and to her children and grandchildren.
- 69. In or about June 2016, a broker procured a tenant for a portion of the ground floor and the entire second floor -- Vitra, Inc., a furniture design company.
- 70. After executing a lease with Vitra, NFMC upon information and belief, failed or refused or attempted not to pay the real estate broker.
- 71. Upon information and belief, Sklar has developed a reputation for refusing to pay brokers. By refusing to pay a broker their legitimate commissions, Sklar has created a dis-incentive for other brokers to work with NFMC to alleviate the serious vacancy rate at 95 Madison Avenue.
- 72. Upon information and belief, Sklar, as a general policy, refuses to pay legitimate bills which results in needless and expensive litigation which costs NFMC much more money than if NFMC had simply paid the obligations. Indeed, even after agreeing to a settlement amount of charges, Sklar, for mere sport, often refuses to pay such agreed upon settlement, thus creating even more needless expense and exposure.
  - 73. Sklar has dragged NFMC into at least four current unjustified litigations.

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74. The first on-going litigation goes back to 2013, when Sklar refused to pay for front doors which had been order for 95 Madison Avenue resulting in the law suit *Fran-Co Remodeling Corp. v. Ninety-Five Madison Avenue LP, et al*, New York Supreme Court, NY Co., Index No. 652666/13. It is certain that NFMC has paid more in legal fees than it owed on the doors which in a settlement, it had agreed to pay for. Apparently, alleging a conspiracy as to delivery charges, Sklar has refused to abide by the terms of the stipulation entered into in that action. As a result, needless additional legal fees continue to mount.

- 75. In another current litigation entitled *Rosenberg Feldman Smith LLP. v. Ninety-Five Madison Avenue LP*, New York Supreme Court, New York Co., Index No. 653953/2018; Sklar has refused to pay her prior counsel's fee incurred in a dispute she fomented with Vitra, Inc. by utterly failing, without justification to sign work permits and to complete projects and improvements the lease, and settlement agreement, required NFMC to perform.
- 76. Notwithstanding the fact that The Rosenberg firm saved the day for NFMC by obtaining the tenant's agreement to arbitrate its disputes regarding the lease and thereby managing to eviscerate the tenant's threat to terminate this lease worth \$11,000,000 over the life of the lease, Sklar is falsely alleging on NFMC's behalf, legal malpractice as a defense and counterclaim.
- 77. Sklar has substituted counsel at least twice in the Vitra, Inc. action and is on her third set of lawyers.

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78. The costs of litigating such a frivolous and un-winnable claim seems highly irresponsible at best, especially given the unnecessary delay and expense of repeatedly substituting counsel.

- 79. The exhibits filed in the action commenced by the Rosenberg Firm give a vivid picture of how difficult, un-cooperative and unfit Sklar is and why she must immediately be removed as manager of 95 Madison Avenue and be prevented from causing any further harm to her family's holdings.
- 80. In the JAMS arbitration entitled *Vitra, Inc. v. Ninety-Five Madison Company, LP*, JAMS No. 1425024190, (which arose out the settlement that Sklar now refuses to comply with) the arbitrator -- retired Supreme Court Justice Hon. Stephen G. Crane, has essentially ruled in favor of the tenant on its claims and in an interim award dated June 18, 2018, provided the tenant \$31,735.89 in damages for constructive eviction (when Sklar changed the locks during construction which, due to Sklar's intransigence, is still not complete); \$100,434.39 in electrical overcharges; a rent abatement (which continues to accrue) which currently stands at more than \$900,000; and an award of its legal fees. The arbitrator has also over-ridden Sklar's failure and refusal to sign work permits.
- 81. As discussed earlier, the Arbitrator has just awarded the tenant more than a years' abatement in rent and awarded them their legal fees.
- 82. As a result of such improper and unjustified actions, NFMC had already been forced, in *Vitra*, *Inc.* v. *Ninety-Five Madison Company LP*, Supreme Court New York Co., Index No. 652342/2017, to provide a rent credit of \$506,250 to Vitra.
- 83. Sklar has fomented needless litigation with its neighbor by refusing to permit them to erect a scaffold and shed to protect 95 Madison Avenue, during that construction.

- 84. Indeed the refusal because so serious, that the neighbor had to commence a special proceeding to force NFMC to permit a shed to protect its own property.
- 85. In the action, RG-29th Street Owner I, LLC v. Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P., Sklar through Laplaca challenged the court on jurisdictional grounds and has even gone to the Appellate Division to seek a stay of the order of the court.
- 86. Petitioner cannot imagine what explanation could exist for a refusal to permit the erection of a scaffold to protect the building. Petitioner believes that such refusal could only result from mental illness.
- 87. In Harty Built LLC v. Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P., Supreme Court New York Co., Index No. 0157349/2018, Harty Built LLC sued NFMC after performing more than \$100,000 worth of work for NFMC, because Sklar refused to pay the final \$26,644.50 owed, after having made previous, substantial payments on the account without objection. This action is ongoing.
- 88. Petitioner believes that it would be manifestly unfair to require that NFMC suffer any further damage from being subject to the effects of Sklar's mental dissorders.
- 89. Upon information and belief, the annual real estate taxes payable by NFMC are approximately \$1.6 million and, when combined with the operating expenses of the building and the wasteful legal expenses incurred by Sklar's intransigence and willful and contumacious actions, significantly exceeds the total annual rental income.
  - 90. Indeed, in its 2017 K-1's provided to Petitioner, NFMC reported a significant loss.
- 91. In 2013, to address the mounting losses in NFMC, upon information and belief, instead of delivering to Petitioner her share of the proceeds of the sale of the Putnam Properties after such were transferred from Madison to the Kinder account, Sklar

individually, caused a significant portion of the funds to be paid to herself (approximately \$2.5 Million) and to NFMC (approximately \$6,000,000).

- 92. Upon information and belief, at no point had Petitioner ever agreed to contribute her share of the proceeds of the sale of the Putnam Properties to NFMC or Sklar.
- 93. After the sale of the Putnam Properties, Sklar refused to distribute any funds to Petitioner.
- 94. Indeed, Sklar suggested that if Petitioner needed money she should sell her used car.
- 95. Ultimately, Sklar did agree to provide \$70,000 to Petitioner, but only on condition that a portion of such funds be paid to Sklar's grandchildren.
- 96. In or about November 2015, Petitioner demanded an accounting and payment of sums due from the sale of the Putnam Properties.
- 97. On or about January 27, 2016, Sklar purported to produce an accounting which asserted that of the \$9,032,302.75 net proceeds of the Putnam Properties sale, the sum of \$7,976,531.74 was owed by petitioner and Sklar to NFMC (the "Purported Accounting").
- 98. Sklar knew that no funds were actually owed to NFMC and that the Purported Accounting was materially false.
- 99. Upon information and belief, as shown in the accounting, Sklar caused Kinder to pay NFMC the overwhelming majority of the proceeds of the sale of the Putnam Properties.
- 100.Upon information and belief, on April 11, 2013, Sklar fraudulently wrote a check for \$3,523,242.00 to NFMC out of the account of Kinder.

101. Upon information and belief, at some point in time, Sklar wrote in the memo section of the check "Total Repayment".

- 102. Upon information and belief, this representation that there was a repayment of a loan, rather than the actual rendering a loan to NFMC, was an act of fraud and self-dealing.
- 103. Upon information and belief, according to a memo prepared by Sklar's tax counsel Honigman, Schwartz, Miller and Cohn, ("Honigman") in or about 2014, defendant NFMC badly needed a cash infusion.
- 104. Upon information and belief, at some point in 2014 Sklar had her counsel prepare a memo (the "Honigman Memo") proposing several scenarios whereby NFMC would either buy out Petitioner's interest in NFMC using Petitioner's own money (obtained improperly from the Putnam Property sale) or whereby Petitioner would lend at a very low interest rate, a portion of Petitioner's share of the sale proceeds from the Putnam Properties to NFMC.
  - 105. Petitioner rejected these proposals.
- 106. The Honigman Memo expressly states that NFMC needed to <u>borrow</u> the funds from Sklar and Petitioner from the sale of the Putnam Properties.
- 107. Upon information and belief, Sklar actively concealed from the Honigman Firm the fact that that she had already transferred more than \$3,500,000 of the proceeds of the sale of the Putnam Property to NFMC.
- 108.Upon information and belief, after she received Petitioner's written demand for an accounting and to be paid her portion of the proceeds of the sale, in or about November 2015, Sklar wrote an additional check to NFMC for \$2,326,211.32 from the Kinder

account, this time fraudulently and falsely marking the check memo, "interest payment" (despite the fact that the earlier check for \$3,523,242.00 was purportedly marked "total repayment").

- 109. This was an unlawful act of self-dealing and fraud.
- 110.Upon information and belief, as shown in the K-1's, Sklar purports to continue to pay NFMC interest from the account of Kinder on unauthorized, undocumented, fictitious, and fraudulent loans purportedly made by NFMC to Kinder, in the amount of at least \$227,246 in 2017 and at least \$206,766 in 2016.
- 111.Upon information and belief, in another act of unlawful self-dealing and fraud, on November 11, 2015 Sklar wrote herself a check from the Kinder account in the amount of \$340,137.75 and marked in the memo section, "Part equalization of distribution regarding LMW expenses".
- 112. Sklar has also demanded that she be paid a real estate broker's commission for arranging the sale of the Putnam Properties, notwithstanding her lack of a proper license another act of fraud and self-dealing.
- 113. By virtue of Sklar and RAS's mismanagement, the only way that NFMC can seem to continue to exist and make ends meet is by Sklar going out and stealing the assets of her limited partners, filing false tax documents, and deceiving the limited partners.
- 114. By virtue of the fact that much of Sklar's years of fraud, incompetence and perfidy have now come to light, Sklar has nowhere to look to steal in order to continue to prop-up NFMC.
  - 115. It is unfortunately now necessary to dissolve NFMC and sell its assets.

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- 116. NFMC is not being operated in conformity with the partnership agreement.
- 117. In light of Sklar's (and by extension RAS -- the general partner) deteriorated mental state, her refusal to permit competent management to operate 95 Madison Avenue, her refusal and inability to rent out the property to prospective tenants, her proclivity to fight with her existing paying tenants, her acts of self-dealing and fraud with respect to the limited partners which cannot be justified under any reading of the business judgment rule and in violation of the various fiduciary duties she owes, her profligate unjustified expenditures on needless and frivolous litigation, and her devotion to committing tax fraud, NFMC is not being operated for any proper or lawful purpose at all.
- 118. It is not reasonably practicable for Ninety-Five Madison Company LP to carry on its business in conformity with the partnership Agreement.

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No Prior application for the relief requested herein has been made.

WHEREFORE Petitioner demands

(1) The judicial dissolution of NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY LP, under

Limited Partnership Act section 212-802.

(2) The discharge of RAS as manager of NFMC;

(3) The appointment of a receiver to engage competent management and to discharge

and eject the present property management while the affairs of NFMC are being

settled and its asset sold by such Receiver.

(4) Appointment of Receiver to Sell 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY and to

distribute the net proceeds of the sale to the Limited Partners of NFMC in their

proportionate shares.

(5) an accounting of the affairs of NFMC.

(6) such other and further relief as to the court seems just and proper.

Dated:

New York, NY

May 21, 2019

LOIS M WEINSTEIN Petitioner

JEFFREY A. BARR

Attorney for Petitioner

225 Broadway, Suite 3110

New York, NY 10007

(212) 227-1834

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**VERIFICATION** 

STATE OF NEW YORK

ss.:

COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

LOIS WEINSTEIN, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

I have read the foregoing Verified Petition and that the contents thereof is true, except as to matters asserted on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe it to be true.

LOIS WEINSTEIN

sworn to before me this 2f day of May, 2019

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## **EXHIBIT 2**

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# SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK NEW YORK COUNTY

| PRESENT:   | HON. ANDREW BORROK   | PARI IA         | AS MOTION 53EFN |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------|
|  | Justice  |                 |                 |
|  | X  | INDEX NO.       | 653735/2019     |
| LOIS WEINSTEIN,  |  | MOTION DATE     | 07/21/2020      |
|  | Plaintiff,   | MOTION SEQ. NO. | . 007           |
|  | - V -  |                 |                 |
| RAS PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LLC,RITA SKLAR, RITA SKLAR, STEVEN MERO, NINETY-FIVE MADISON DECISION + COMPANY LP MOT |  |                 |                 |
|  | Defendant.   |                 |                 |
|  | X  |                 |                 |
| •  | e-filed documents, listed by NYSCEF document nu<br>153, 154, 155, 156, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, | ,               |                 |
| were read on this motion to/for  |  | DISMISS         |                 |

Upon the foregoing documents, the respondents' motion to dismiss the amended verified petition pursuant to CPLR §§ 3211(a)(1), (a)(3) and (a)(7) is denied, and the petitioners' cross motion (i) for summary judgment pursuant to CPLR §§ 405, 2125 and 3211(c), and (ii) to extend the time to serve the amended petition *nunc pro tunc* pursuant to CPLR § 2004, and (iii) for leave to further amend the petition and file a proposed Second Amended Verified Petition pursuant to CPLR § 3026 is granted as set forth below.

### FACTS RELEVANT TO THE INSTANT MOTION

This proceeding was originally commenced on June 26, 2019 by Lois Weinstein, a limited partner of Ninety-Five Madison Company LP (the **Partnership**), seeking, among other things, judicial dissolution of the Partnership, the appointment of a receiver, and the sale of the

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Partnership's primary asset, a 16-story commercial building located at 95 Madison Avenue, New

York, New York (the **Building**). In sum and substance, Ms. Weinstein alleged gross

mismanagement and waste by RAS Property Management (RAS), the Partnership's general

partner, and by Rita Sklar, RAS's manager, in the management of the Building. Ms. Weinstein

is defined as the **Limited Partner** in the Partnership Agreement (NYSCEF Doc. No. 151 at 1).

Ms. Weinstein died on November 25, 2019. Indisputably, no stay or dismissal of this proceeding

took place prior to Ms. Weinstein's death.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as the original Verified Petition in this action alleged derivative claims and because the

Estate may not maintain derivative claims on behalf of the Partnership, the court originally

denied the motion to substitute Carol E. Keller and Gail Shields as the preliminary executors of

the Estate of Lois Weinstein (the **Estate**) for Ms. Weinstein as the petitioner (see NYSCEF Doc.

No. 116). The respondents then moved to dismiss the petition and the Estate cross-moved for,

inter alia, leave to file an amended verified petition (the AVP) (Mtn. Seq. No. 006). In a

decision and order dated June 15, 2020 (the **Prior Decision**), the court granted the Estate's

motion to serve the AVP, ordered service within 20 days of thereof, and permitted the Estate to

be substituted in place of Ms. Weinstein as petitioner (NYSCEF Doc. No. 141). The court

denied the respondents' motion to dismiss in its entirety (id.).

Per the AVP, the petitioners now seek on behalf of the Estate, individually, (i) a declaration that

the Partnership was dissolved by operation of law, (ii) the appointment of a Receiver to distribute

<sup>1</sup> The action was only stayed, briefly, by operation of law upon Ms. Weinstein's death.

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the assets of the Partnership to the partners and the Estate in their proportionate shares, (iii) a writ of assistance to the Sheriff of the City of New York, to eject RAS and Ms. Sklar from all portions of the Building and (iv) an order requiring the respondents to turn over to the receiver

all records concerning operation of the Partnership (NYSCEF Doc. No. 148). The respondents,

again, argue that the AVP improperly seeks to assert only derivative claims.

On August 7, 2019, (and also prior to Ms. Weinstein's death), in a separate JAMS arbitration action (the **JAMS Arbitration**) between Vitra, Inc., one of the Building's primary tenants, and the Partnership, the arbitrator, the Hon. Stephen Crane (Ret.) appointed a receiver with authority over "all of the landlord's (RAS Property Management LLC's and Ninety-Five Madison LP's) obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives" (JAMS No. 1425024190; NYSCEF Doc. No. 165, ¶ 14). The appointment was subsequently confirmed by the court (Scarpulla, J.) on October 30, 2019 in "all respects" (*Vitra, Inc. v Ninety-Five Madison Company, LP*, 650656; NYSCEF Doc. No. 170). On the record before the court, this receivership appears to continue to this day (NYSCEF Doc. No. 162, ¶ 43; *see also* NYSCEF Doc. No. 171).

Reference is made to a certain Ninety-Five Madison Company Limited Partnership Agreement (the **Original Partnership Agreement**; NYSCEF Doc. No. 14), dated June 1, 1982, by and between Rita A. Sklar as general partner and Rita A. Sklar and Lawrence Weinstein, trustees of a trust U/W of Irving Weinstein for the benefit of Lois Michelle Weinstein as the limited partner, as amended by the First Amendment to the Ninety-Five Madison Company Limited Partnership Agreement dated December 28, 2012 (the **Amendment**; the Original Partnership Agreement, together with the Amendment, hereinafter, collectively, the **Partnership Agreement**; NYSCEF

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Doc. No. 64), by and between Rita A. Sklar, as sole member and manager of RAS Property Management, LLC as the current general partner and Lois M. Weinstein as the current limited partner. Capitalized terms used but not defined herein shall have the meaning ascribed thereto in the Partnership Agreement.

#### Section 9.1 of the Partnership Agreement provides:

- 9.1 Events Which Cause a Dissolution. The Partnership shall continue in full force and effect until December 31, 2050, except that the Partnership shall be dissolved prior thereto upon the happening of any of the following events:
  - B. The withdrawal or Bankruptcy of a General Partner if the Partnership is not continued in accordance with Section 8.5 hereof;

(NYSCEF Doc. No. 14, § 9.1)

Section 8.5 of the Partnership Agreement provides:

Effect of Withdrawal; Election to Continue Business. Upon the withdrawal or Bankruptcy of the General Partner, the General Partner or her legal representatives shall promptly notify the Limited Partner of such event and the Partnership shall be dissolved and terminated unless the Limited Partner elects to continue the business of the partnership, either a new general partner shall be admitted to the Partnership or the Partnership shall be reconstituted as a general partnership. ... The withdrawal of the General Partner shall not be deemed effective until the expiration of 90 days from the day on which such notice has been mailed to the Limited Partner....

(NYSCEF Doc. No. 14, § 8.5).

As discussed further below, the Estate maintains that pursuant to New York's Revised Limited Partnership Act (**RLPA**), the Partnership was dissolved by operation of law either as of November 5, 2019, i.e., 90 days after a receiver was appointed in the JAMS Arbitration, or on October 24, 2019, i.e., 120 days after this proceeding was commenced by Ms. Weinstein because in either such event the general partner "withdrew" and the Partnership was not continued. The

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respondents do not dispute that RAS never sent notice to the Limited Partner (i.e., Ms.

Weinstein) of any event of dissolution and that no election to continue the Partnership was made.

**DISCUSSION** 

I. The AVP is Deemed Timely Filed

As noted above, the Estate was required to serve the AVP within 20 days of the Prior Decision,

i.e., by July 6, 2020 (id.). Due to a technology issue with counsel for petitioners' computer, the

amended petition was not actually filed until 12:24 A.M. on July 7, 2020, i.e., 24 minutes into

the 21<sup>st</sup> day (NYSCEF Doc. No. 162, ¶ 7). Although the respondents fail to articulate any actual

prejudice from the 24 minute delay in filing, the respondents argue, as part of the instant motion,

that the court should "not countenance such a clear and unnecessary flouting" of the court's

order (NYSCEF Doc. No. 156 at 1).

The court will not penalize the Estate for filing the AVP 24 minutes late due to what counsel

attests was an issue with his computer scanning technology (Barr Affirm., NYSCEF Doc. No.

162, ¶ 7) as the respondents can show no prejudice from this delay. The cross motion to extend

the time to file the petition to July 7, 2020 is accordingly granted, *nunc pro tunc*.

II. Failure to State a Cause of Action

On a motion to dismiss a petition, the court must accept the facts alleged therein as true, the

petitioner must be accorded every possible favorable inference and the court must determine if

the facts alleged by the petitioner fit within any cognizable legal theory (Lawrence v Miller, 11

NY3d 588, 595 [2008]).

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NYSCEF DOC. NO. 189

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The respondents argue that the AVP should be dismissed because the Estate is only entitled to share in the profits and losses of the Partnership under the Partnership Agreement, and cannot "bind the Partnership" by seeking to remove its general partner, appoint a receiver, dissolve the Partnership or wind up its affairs (NYSCEF Doc. No. 156 at 2). In its opposition papers, the Estate argues that it is not seeking to remove RAS as general partner, but only seeking a declaration that the Partnership was dissolved by operation of law:

Respondents misconstrue the [AVP] to seek removal of RAS ... [R]emoval is not the relief being sought here. The relief is a declaration that RAS ceased to be the general partner on either October 24, 2019 or November 5, 2019 and that because no election was made within 90 days to continue the partnership, [the Partnership] was dissolved as a matter of law [on] January 22, 2020 or February 3, 2020

(NYSCEF Doc. No. 162, ¶ 22, citing AVP, ¶¶ 23-24).

In other words, the AVP seeks as its remedy, distributions of the Partnership assets and the appointment of a receiver because the Partnership *has already been dissolved* (*id.*, ¶ 23 ["Petitioners seek only the distribution to the Estate of the Estate's share of the assets of the partnership as is their rights under sections 9.2 and 9.4 of the Partnership Agreement and NYRPLA § 121-804"]). Inasmuch as this is not explicitly stated in the AVP, the proposed Second Amended Verified Petition makes this clear (NYSCEF Doc. No. 167, ¶ 33).

The RLPA is a "default statute" imposing rules on a limited partnership if the partnership does not explicitly opt out of certain provisions (*A&F Hamilton Heights Cluster, Inc. v Urban Green Mgmt, Inc.*, 186 AD3d 409, 417 [1<sup>st</sup> Dept 2020]).

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Section 121-801 of the RLPA, titled Nonjudicial Dissolution, provides:

A limited partnership is dissolved and its affairs shall be wound up upon the happening of the first to occur of the following:

- (a) at the time, if any, provided in the certificate of limited partnership;
- (b) at the time or upon the happening of events specified in the partnership agreement;
- (c) subject to any requirement in the partnership agreement requiring approval by any greater or lesser percentage of limited partners and general partners, upon the written consent (1) of all of the general partners and (2) of a majority in interest of each class of limited partners;
- (d) an event of withdrawal of a general partner unless (1) at the time there is at least one other general partner and the partnership agreement permits the business of the limited partnership to be carried on by the remaining general partner and that partner does so, or (2) unless the partnership agreement provides otherwise, if within ninety days after the withdrawal of the last general partner, not less than a majority in interest of the limited partners agree in writing to continue the business of the limited partnership and to the appointment, effective as of the date of withdrawal, of one or more additional general partners if necessary or desired; or
- (e) entry of a decree of judicial dissolution under section 121-802 of this article. (NY RLPA § 121-801 [emphasis added]).

Section 121-402(e)(ii) of RLPA provides that a person or entity ceases to be the general partner of a limited partnership if, within 90 days after a receiver is appointed without the general partner's consent or acquiescence, the appointment is not vacated or stayed, or if within 90 days after the expiration of any stay, the appointment is not vacated (NY RLPA, § 121-402[e][ii]).

The Estate maintains that RAS "withdrew" and ceased being the general partner because a receiver was appointed over the Partnership's assets on August 7, 2019 in the JAMS Arbitration and such receivership was not vacated within 90 days (RPLA § 121-402[e][ii]) and, not only was

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approval of the Limited Partner for the continuation of the business of the Partnership never

obtained, RAS never even sought it. Therefore, the Estate argues the Partnership was dissolved

on November 5, 2019 – i.e., approximately 21 days before the Limited Partner died.

In their opposition papers, the respondents argue dissolution never occurred because Section 8.5

of the Partnership Agreement first required the general partner to send notice to the Limited

Partner in order for the Limited Partner to elect to continue the Partnership and such notice was

never sent. Thus, the respondents argue, the Partnership was never dissolved. The respondents

also argue that the Partnership would have been continued if such notice were made because

81% of the shares of "the Limited Partnership shares" are controlled by Rita Sklar.

The arguments fail. The respondents cannot use their own failure to send the required notice as a

shield and otherwise frustrate the requirement that consent of the "Limited Partner" be obtained.

The express language of Section 8.5 provides that the right to continue the Partnership was that

of "the Limited Partner" – i.e., Ms. Weinstein – and not a majority of the limited partnership

interests (NYSCEF Doc. No. 64; NYSCEF Doc. No. 14, § 8.5 ["the Partnership shall be

dissolved and terminated unless the Limited Partner elects to continue the business of the

partnership" [emphasis added]). In any event, on the record before the court, Ms. Sklar was not

during the relevant time period, a limited partner. Pursuant to the Partnership Agreement she

was originally the general partner, and then she assigned her general partnership interest to RAS.

Under the RLPA, a person or entity also ceases to be a general partner of a limited partnership if,

inter alia, within 120 days after the commencement of any proceeding against the general

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partner seeking reorganization, arrangement, composition, readjustment, liquidation, dissolution,

or similar relief under any statute, law, or regulation, the proceeding has not been dismissed or

stayed, or if, within 90 days after the expiration of any such stay, the proceeding has not been

dismissed, unless otherwise provided in the partnership agreement or approved by all partners

(NY RPLA § 121-402[e][i]).

Ms. Weinstein commenced this proceeding on June 26, 2019 seeking the judicial dissolution of

the Partnership and the appointment of a receiver. There was no stay or dismissal of the action

prior to the 120<sup>th</sup> day following June 26, 2019, which was October 24, 2019. The action was

stayed only on November 25, 2019 when Ms. Weinstein died, i.e., via the automatic stay

imposed upon the death of any party. Therefore, the petitioners argue that the Partnership was

dissolved as a matter of law under both Section 8.5 of the Original Partnership Agreement and

RPLA Section 121-801(d).

In their opposition papers, the Respondents argue that Section 121-402(e)(i) of the RLPA only

applies to actions brought *against* the general partner, and not to actions against the limited

partnership itself, and that it is, therefore, inapplicable. The argument is unavailing. The

original verified petition was properly brought by Ms. Weinstein against RAS and Ms. Sklar,

seeking RAS's removal, i.e., it was "a proceeding against the general partner," the 120<sup>th</sup> days

from the date of commencement occurred prior to Ms. Weinstein's death, and there was no

election to continue the business of the Partnership.

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In fact, both dissolution dates, whether triggered by Section 121-402(e)(i) or (e)(ii), occurred prior to Ms. Weinstein's death on November 25, 2019. Accordingly, the Estate may properly maintain the instant action to, among other things, distribute the assets of the Partnership to the limited partners and the Estate in their proportionate shares.

To the extent that the respondents broadly maintain that neither Section 121-402(e)(i) or (e)(ii) is applicable because those provisions only apply "unless otherwise provided in the partnership agreement" (NY RLPA § 121-402[e]), this argument also fails. The Partnership Agreement does not provide an exhaustive list of events which constitute a general partner withdrawal or otherwise explicitly opt-out of Section 121-402(e) (*A&F Hamilton Heights Cluster*, 186 AD3d at 417). In fact, the Partnership Agreement addresses what happens upon the withdrawal of the general partner – i.e., dissolution unless there is an election to continue the business of the partnership by the Limited Partner.

#### III. Summary Judgment

The Estate maintains that summary judgment is appropriate in this case as no issues of fact are actually in dispute. The respondents argue that the Estate's cross motion for summary judgment, brought pursuant to CPLR 3211(c), should be denied as procedurally improper because issue has not been joined (NYSCEF Doc. No. 176 at 14). Although, "[o]rdinarily, a summary judgment motion brought prior to service of an answer should be dismissed as premature, ... the CPLR expressly confers upon *nisi prisi* courts the power to dispense with responses to amended pleadings, in their discretion" (*Stephanie R. Cooper, P.C. v Robert*, 78 AD3d 572 [1<sup>st</sup> Dept 2010] [summary judgment may be granted prior to filing of answer where defendant had notice of

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plaintiff's contentions and ample opportunity to submit proof in opposition]; see also CPLR §

3211[c]).

Inasmuch as the respondents suggest that there are issues of fact requiring the denial of summary

judgment as to (i) their good faith belief that the provisions LRPA Section 121-402(e) were

inapplicable, and (ii) the parties' intent to "otherwise provide" for the removal of the general

partner in the Partnership Agreement, these are not factual issues requiring denial of the

summary judgment motion. The fact that the respondents may have believed that RLPA Sections

121-402(e)(i) and (e)(ii) were inapplicable is simply irrelevant if they did not provide otherwise

in their Partnership Agreement (see A&F Hamilton Heights Cluster, 186 AD3d at 417).

Furthermore, nothing in the Partnership Agreement provides otherwise. To the contrary, Section

9.1 of Article IX, Dissolution and Termination of the Partnership, provides:

9.1 Events Which Cause a Dissolution. The Partnership shall continue in full force and effect until December 31, 2050, except that the Partnership shall be dissolved prior

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thereto upon the happening of any of the following events:

B. The withdrawal or Bankruptcy of a General Partner if the Partnership

is not continued in accordance with Section 8.5 hereof;

(NYSCEF Doc. No. 14, § 9.1)

Because, as discussed above, the general partner did not send out notice seeking to continue the

business of the Partnership and there has been no election by the Limited Partner to continue the

business of the Partnership, the Partnership was dissolved.

For the avoidance of doubt, the respondents' motion for sanctions against the Estate is denied.

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Accordingly, it is

ORDERED that the respondents' motion is denied in its entirety; and it is further

ORDERED that the branch of petitioners' cross motion that seeks leave to extent time to serve the

amended verified petition is granted, and such time is extended to 21 days, nunc pro tunc, and it

is further

ORDERED that the branch of petitioners' cross motion that seeks summary judgment in

petitioners' favor on and a declaratory judgment with respect to the subject matter of the instant

petition is granted; and it is further

ADJUDGED and DECLARED that Ninety-Five Madison Company LP was dissolved by

operation of law; and it is further

ORDERED that the parties are directed to submit proposed orders to the court for the liquidation

of the Partnership in accordance with the terms of the Partnership Agreement and the RLPA on

notice on or before November 23, 2020; and it is further

ORDERED that the branch of the petitioners' cross motion seeking leave to amend is denied as

moot.

10/23/2020

DATE

ANDREW BORROK, J.S.C.

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| CHECK ONE:            | Х | CASE DISPOSED              |  |        |   | NON-FINAL DISPOSITION |  |           |
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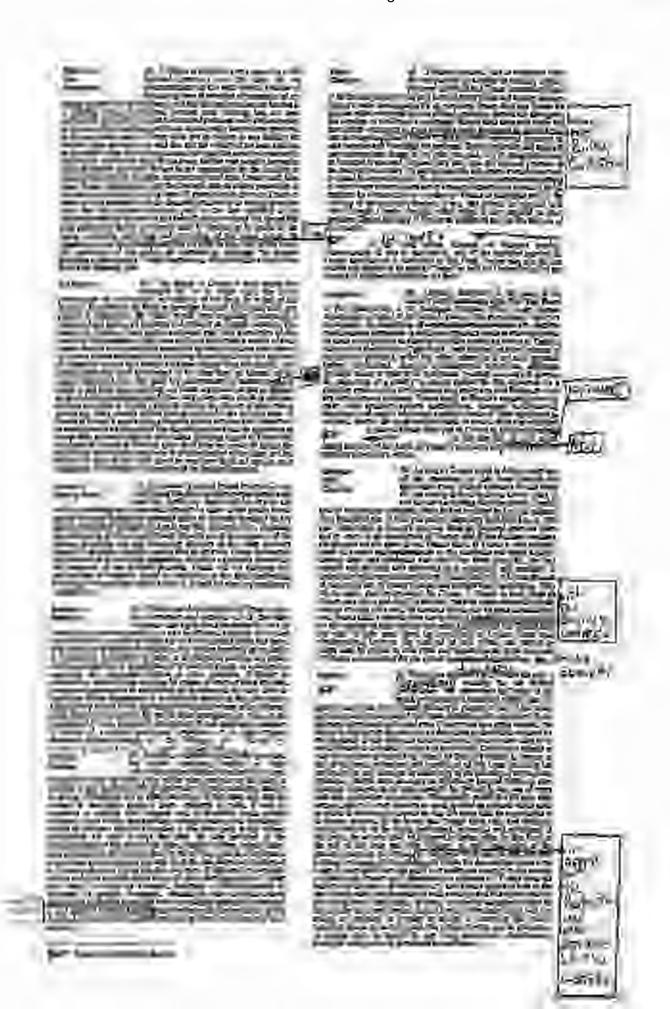
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# **EXHIBIT 3**

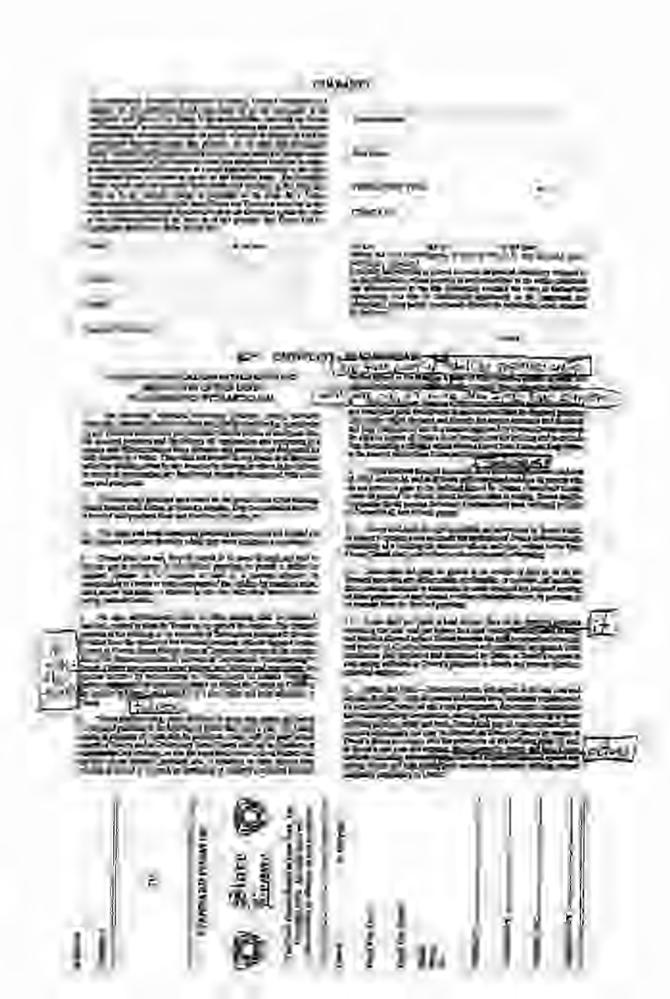












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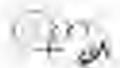
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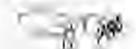
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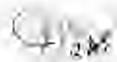
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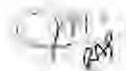
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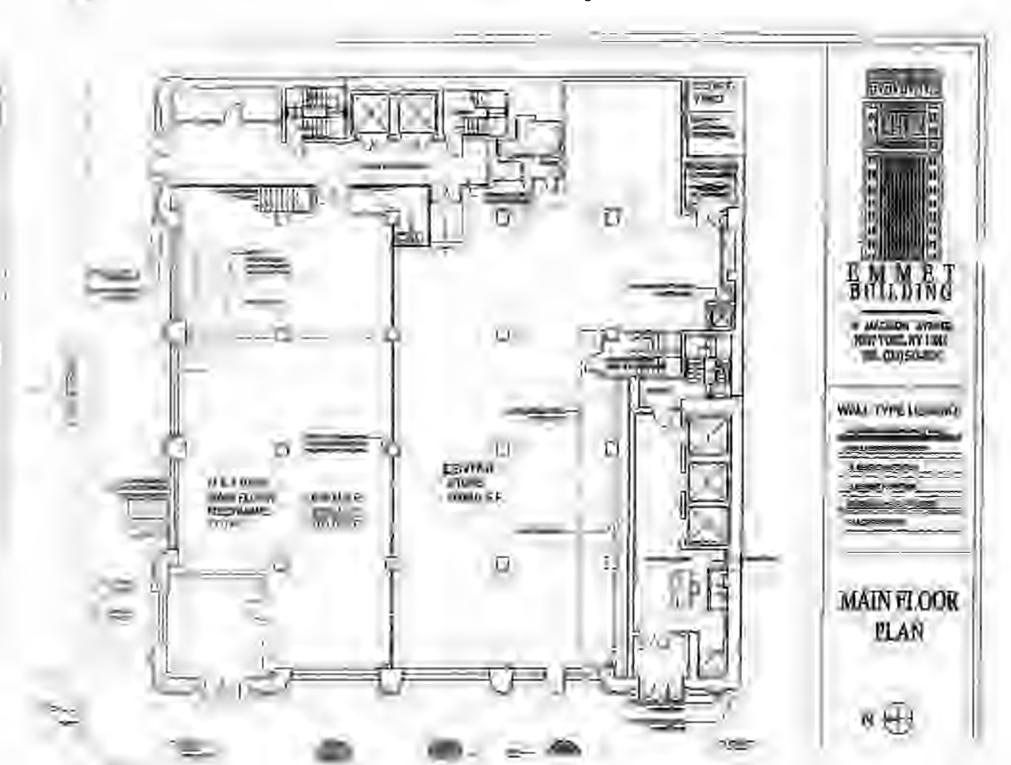
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# EXHIBIT A DEMISED PREMISES (1 OF 2) GROUND FLOOR CENTER STORE

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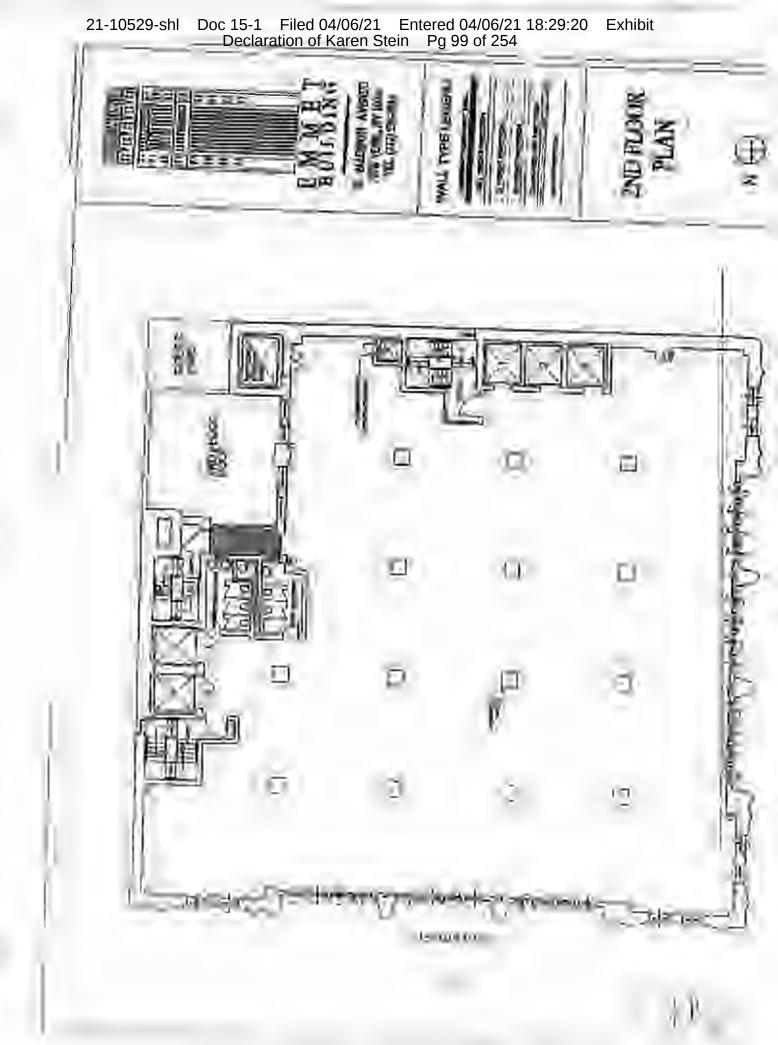


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EXHIBIT B

DEMISED PREMISES (2 OF 2)

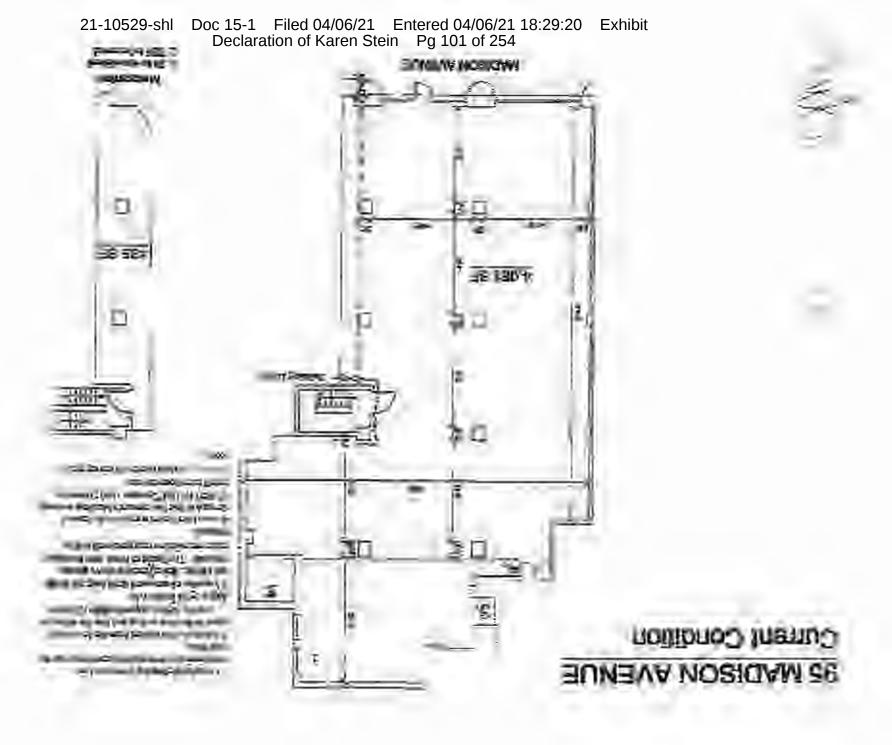
ENTIRE SECOND (2<sup>ND</sup>) FLOOR



21-10529-shl Doc 15-1 Filed 04/06/21 Entered 04/06/21 18:29:20 Exhibit Declaration of Karen Stein Pg 100 of 254

EXHIBIT C GROUND FLOOR CENTER STORE CURRENT CONDITION





## EXHIBIT D LANDLERDYS WORK

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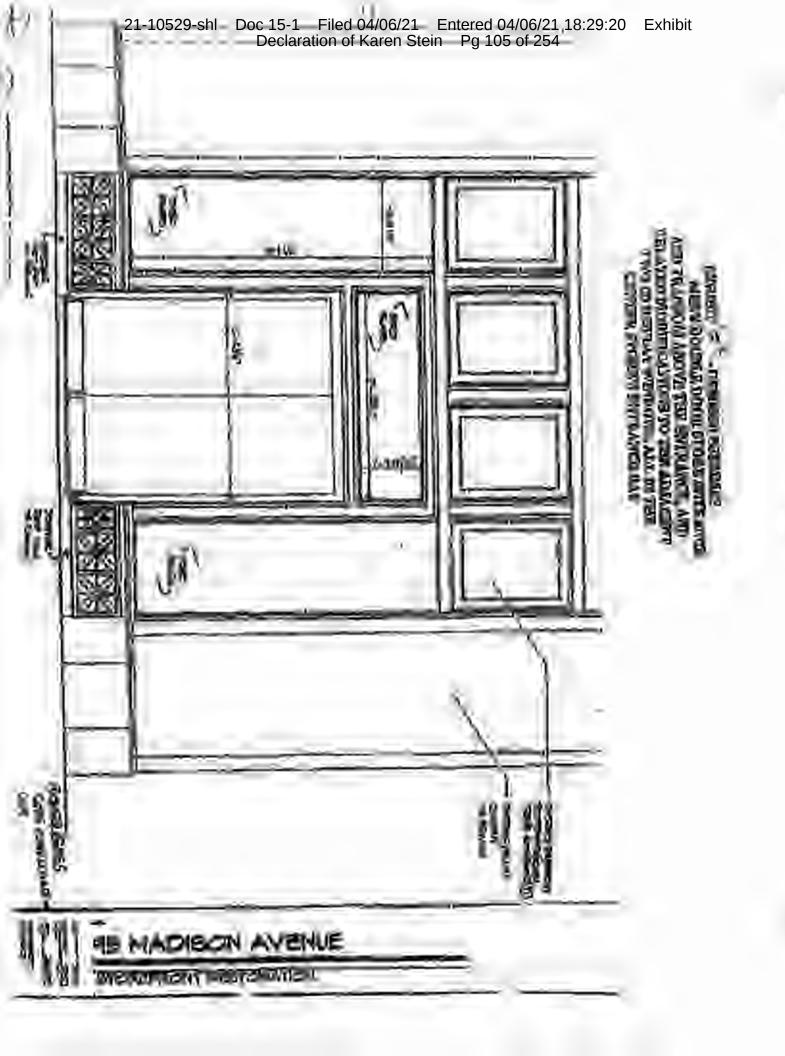
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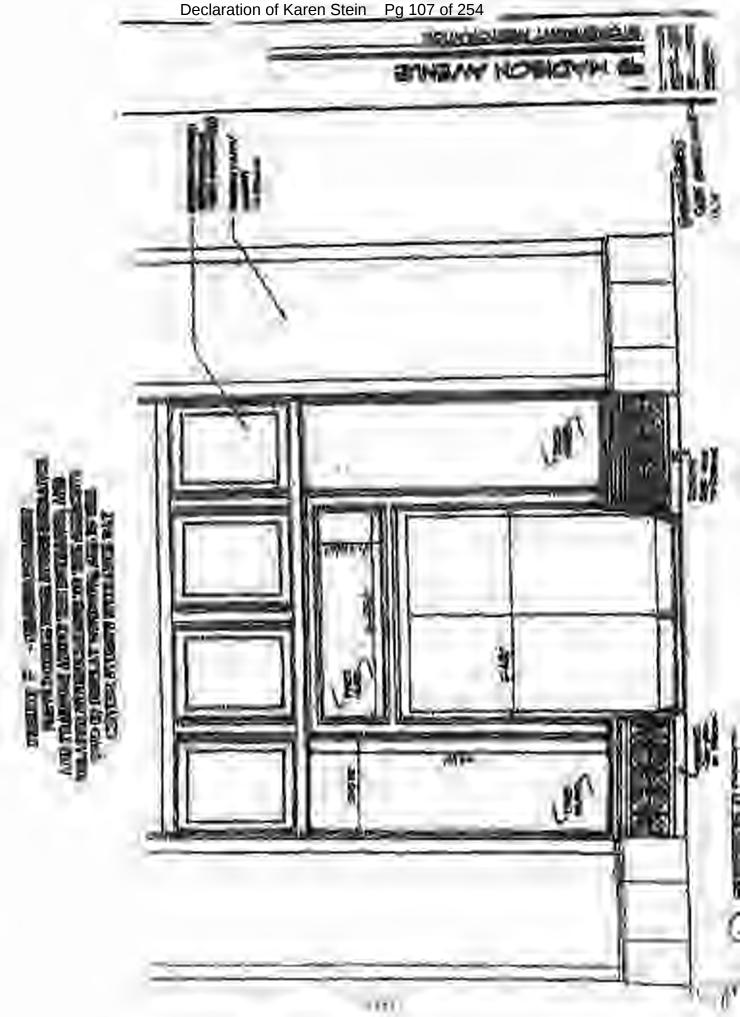
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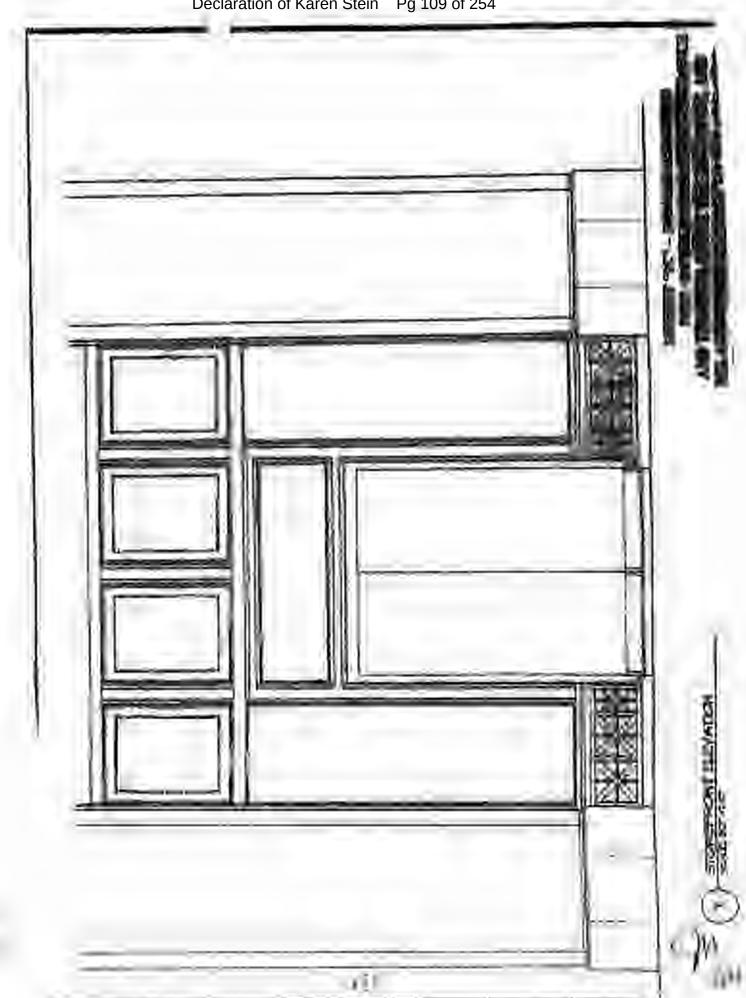
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# NOTIFIAL AND ESTEWATED TAX CALCULATIONS USED TO DETERMINE MAXIMUM RENT DEED TS

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TES-25-0900 (81/LV)

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# EXHIBIT - ! -

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# **EXHIBIT 4**

INDEX NO. 655408/2019

Declaration of Karen Stein Pg 123 of 254

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK COUNTY OF NEW YORK Index No.: VITRA, INC., Date Purchased: Plaintiff, **SUMMONS** -against-Basis of Venue: NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, L.P., Defendant's principal place of business Defendant. 95 Madison Avenue New York, New York

TO THE ABOVE NAMED DEFENDANT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to answer the Complaint in this action and to serve a copy of your Answer, or, if the Complaint is not served with this summons, to serve a notice of appearance, on the Plaintiff's attorneys within twenty (20) days after the service of this summons, exclusive of the day of service (or within thirty (30) days after the service is complete if this summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York); and in case of your failure to appear or to answer, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

Dated: New York, New York September 17, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

SILLS CUMMIS & GROSS P.C.

Attorneys for Plaintiff

Vitra, Inc.

101 Park Avenue, 28th Floor New York, New York 10178

(212) 643-7000

TO:

NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, L.P. 95 Madison Avenue New York, New York

6669423 v1

FILED: NEW YORK COUNTY CLERK 09/18/2019 09:47 AM

INDEX NO. 655408/2019

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Declaration of Karen Stein Pg 124 of 254

| SUPREME COURT OF THE STAT<br>COUNTY OF NEW YORK |            |                              |  |  |  |
|---|------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| VITRA, INC., -against-                          | Plaintiff, | Index No  VERIFIED COMPLAINT |  |  |  |
| NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, L.P.,              |            |                              |  |  |  |
|   | Defendant. |                              |  |  |  |
|   |            |                              |  |  |  |

Plaintiff, Vitra, Inc. ("Vitra"), by and through its attorneys, Sills Cummis & Gross P.C., as and for its Verified Complaint against defendant, Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P. ("Landlord"), states as follows:

### THE PARTIES

- Vitra is a domestic business corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, having a place of business in New York, New York.
- 2. Vitra sells high end contemporary furniture with its own showrooms and retail stores in major cities in the United States.
- Upon information and belief, Landlord is a domestic limited partnership organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, having a place of business at 95
   Madison Avenue, New York, New York.
- 4. Upon information and belief, Landlord is the fee owner of the premises known as the Emmet Building located at 95 Madison Avenue, New York, New York (the "Building").

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THE LEASE AGREEMENT

5. Pursuant to a written commercial Agreement of Lease dated June 18, 2016 (the "Lease"), Landlord leased to Vitra a portion of the Building described as "the ground floor center store, containing approximately 4000 usable square feet, and the entire second (2<sup>nd</sup>) floor

6. The Lease is for a term of eleven years and nine months.

containing approximately 8060 usable square feet" (the "Premises").

7. In Article 2 of the Lease, it was agreed that the Vitra shall use the Premises for "a retail store for the sale of high end furniture and accessories, showrooms and related offices for the sale of [Vitra] designed and manufactured products and other related items sold by [Vitra]."

8. Landlord and Vitra understood that, in order for the Premises to be used as intended, alterations and renovations were required.

THE PARTIES ENTER INTO A STIPULATION OF SETTLEMENT

9. From the inception of the Lease, Landlord obstructed, harassed and prevented Vitra from performing the alterations and renovations necessary to utilize the Premises.

10. Despite its own misconduct, on April 21, 2017, Landlord, through its counsel, purported to serve Vitra with a Notice of Default ("2017 Notice of Default").

11. In an action commenced by Vitra against Landlord (the "Prior Action"), this Court issued a *Yellowstone* injunction in connection with the 2017 Notice of Default.

12. On December 7, 2017, with the assistance of the Court, the Prior Action was settled. On the record in open Court, the parties entered into a Stipulation of Settlement, which

was thereafter so-ordered by Justice Scarpulla on February 20, 2018 (the "So-Ordered Settlement").

13. Paragraph 28 of the So-Ordered Settlement provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

Any and all disputes arising out of the interpretation and enforcement of this Stipulation and Tenant's alterations through the time Tenant substantially opens for business shall be referred to the Honorable Steven Crane, as arbiter, for binding determination. [Emphasis added].

14. The Stipulation also provides that Judge Crane's rulings are final and binding.

#### THE PENDING ARBITRATION

- 15. Vitra was compelled to initiate the dispute-resolution procedure as provided in the So-Ordered Settlement, and commenced an arbitration before Justice Crane at JAMS, only two months after the Prior Action was "settled."
- 16. Arbitration hearings began in April 2018, and have continued for the past one and a half years.

#### Justice Crane Issues a Yellowstone Injunction

- 17. On April 10, 2018, Justice Crane issued a preliminary injunction, which provided, inter alia, that Vitra is entitled to uninterrupted use, occupancy and possession of the Premises.
- 18. Despite the foregoing, in May 2018, Landlord purported to serve a second notice of default, asserting that Vitra was in default of Article 78(A) and (B) of the Lease, Article 17(1) of the Lease, and Articles 56 A(i), (ii) and (vi), Exhibit E and Exhibit K of the Lease.
- 19. On consent of the parties, Justice Crane issued a Yellowstone injunction in connection therewith, which remains in effect to date.

Justice Crane Issues Orders and Awards Governing Vitra's Construction

20. Since then, and continuing to date, Justice Crane has ruled upon a multitude of

construction-related disputes in accordance with the So-Ordered Stipulation.

21. On October 10, 2018, Justice Crane issued an Order directing that Vitra was to

proceed with the installation of the entry door to the Premises substantially in accordance with

Plan A-865. Plan A-865 modified Plan A-864, which had been approved by Landlord, in order

to conform to the requirements of the Landmarks Preservation Commission ("LPC").

22. Landlord violated the October 10, 2018 Order regarding an Exhibit to be

submitted to LPC and, in an attempt to undermine the Order, wrongfully submitted a letter to the

general counsel of LPC.

23. On November 22, 2018, Justice Crane issued a Construction Protocol Order,

which was intended to facilitate Vitra's construction of the Premises.

24. Landlord, however, violated the Construction Protocol Order.

25. On April 10, 2019, Justice Crane signed an Order nunc pro tunc as of a hearing

held on March 12, 2019, determining that Landlord had violated the Construction Protocol

Order. Moreover, between March 13, 2019 and April 15, 2019, Justice Crane issued three

additional Orders directed at Landlord's continued wrongful misconduct and interference with

Vitra's ability to perform its construction.

26. In the Order dated April 15, 2019, Justice Crane noted that "his efforts to

accommodate [Landlord's] legitimate needs had been met with continuous misbehavior,

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distortion of fact and bad faith deprivation of the benefits of the bargain that [Vitra] is legally entitled to expect..."

- 27. On February 24, 2019, Justice Crane issued the Second Interim Award in which, among other things, Justice Crane ruled that the Lease required Landlord to accommodate Vitra's work, even if it costs Landlord money to do so.
- 28. The Second Interim Award also noted the history of Landlord's interference with Vitra's work and stated that it was a "classic case of a Claimant being excused from performing a condition of its contract because it was prevented from doing so by the other party to the contract."
- 29. Then, as a result of Landlord's continued obstruction with Vitra's performance of its work, on August 7, 2019, Justice Crane issued the Amended Fifth Interim Award, in which he appointed Danielle C. Lesser, Esq., of Morrison Cohen LLP, as temporary receiver in respect of all of the Landlord's obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives under the Lease, the So-Ordered Settlement, and pursuant to the Orders of the Arbitrator, in respect of and through the date of completion of Vitra's Initial Alterations, and that date in which Vitra substantially opens for business in the Premises.
- 30. Following the Landlord's ongoing misconduct, Justice Crane issued an Order dated August 29, 2019, in which, *inter alia*, Landlord and its principal, Rita Sklar, are prohibited, in the absence of an emergency, from entering any of the space leased by Vitra. Ms. Sklar's access, except in an emergency, is conditioned on at least two business days advance notice, specifying the purpose of the visit or access, the individual or individuals who will be entering the Premises, the time of day and when entry is proposed and the expected length of the visit.

Landlord Attempts to Hold Vitra in Default

31. On February 14, 2019, Landlord submitted a motion to Justice Crane to hold Vitra

in breach of Article 78 of the Lease (the "Motion").

32. Vitra opposed the Motion, and a hearing was scheduled before Justice Crane on

September 10, 2019.

33. On September 8, 2019, Landlord's counsel advised that Landlord was

withdrawing the Motion.

34. At the hearing on September 10, 2019, and in reliance on JAMS Rule 13(b),

Justice Crane accepted the withdrawal of the Motion, but deemed it to be with prejudice.

LANDLORD'S LATEST NOTICE OF DEFAULT

35. On September 9, 2019, Landlord purported to serve Vitra with a Notice of Default

(the "2019 Notice of Default").

36. The 2019 Notice of Default enumerates over twenty-nine (29) purported defaults.

37. Among other things, the 2019 Notice of Default alleges construction-related

failures. All such construction-related issues must be referred to Justice Crane for binding

arbitration pursuant to the So-Ordered Settlement.

38. The 2019 Notice of Default also alleges violations of Article 78 of the Lease.

Such violations are barred by both the pending Yellowstone injunction and Landlord's

withdrawal of its Motion with prejudice.

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39. The 2019 Notice of Default further alleges violations of the Lease which have been superseded or modified by the various Orders issued by Justice Crane.

40. The 2019 Notice of Default then states, in relevant part:

If Tenant shall have failed to comply with or remedy all of the defaults stated above within such fifteen (15) days, or if the said defaults or omissions complained of shall be of a nature that the same cannot be completely cured or remedied within said fifteen (15) day period and if Tenant shall not have diligently commenced curing such defaults within such fifteen (15) day period, and shall not thereafter with reasonable diligence and in good faith proceed to remedy or cure such defaults, then Landlord <u>may</u> pursue all of its legal and equitable remedies under the Lease, including its right to terminate the Lease, upon written five (5) days' notice of cancellation upon Tenant. [Emphasis added].

41. Vitra disputes the validity of the 2019 Notice of Default and disputes that it is in default of its obligations under the Lease.

### LANDLORD IGNORES ITS OWN OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE LEASE

- 42. Despite Landlord's insistence that Vitra abide by the terms of the Lease, Landlord itself has failed to do so.
  - 43. Article 4 of the Lease provides, in pertinent part:

[Landlord] shall maintain and repair the pubic portions of the building, both exterior and interior...

- 44. There presently exists a leak from the Landlord's second floor courtyard roof into a portion of Vitra's ground floor premises.
- 45. Vitra has complained to Landlord about the leak on numerous occasions since at least October 2018.

46. Landlord has failed to repair the leak, and merely placed a tarp or other covering over the second floor courtyard roof. However, water continues to leak into a portion of Vitra's ground floor premises.

47. Vitra has paid its contractor more than \$3,600,000 to date for its construction services regarding the initial alterations, and Vitra's fit-out of the Premises.

# AS AND FOR A FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

- 48. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 47 as though more fully set forth at length herein.
- 49. As a result of the foregoing, Vitra claims that the Notice of Default is defective, null and void, and/or of no force and effect, and/or is insufficient to constitute a notice of default or notice to cure predicate to a notice terminating the Lease.
  - 50. Upon information and belief, Landlord contests the foregoing claim by Vitra.
- 51. There is thus a dispute as to the respective rights and legal relations by and between Vitra and Landlord pursuant to the Lease.
- 52. Because of such dispute, a judicial determination and declaration as to the respective rights of the parties is desirable and necessary in order that Vitra's rights may be determined and adjudged without Vitra experiencing a loss of its valuable and unique rights under the Lease.
- 53. Vitra will suffer irreparable harm unless the status quo is maintained and termination of the Lease is prevented pending the determination of this action on the merits.

54. Vitra has no adequate remedy at law.

55. Vitra requests judgment declaring that the 2019 Notice of Default is defective, null and void, and/or of no force and effect, and/or is insufficient to constitute a notice of default or notice to cure predicate to a notice terminating the Lease, and preliminarily and permanently enjoining and restraining Landlord, its principals, officers, agents and employees, and anyone acting by, through or under Landlord, from taking any action, issuing any notice and/or commencing any action or proceeding to terminate the Lease or to remove or evict Vitra from

### AS AND FOR A SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

the Premises on any of the grounds set forth in the 2019 Notice of Default.

- 56. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 55 as though more fully set forth at length herein.
- 57. If it is determined that Vitra is in default of the Lease as alleged in the 2019 Notice of Default, in whole or in part, Vitra is ready, willing and able to cure such defaults short of vacating the Premises.
- 58. Vitra will suffer irreparable harm unless the status quo is maintained, the expiration of the curative period as contained in the 2019 Notice of Default is enjoined, stayed and tolled, and Vitra is afforded an adequate opportunity to cure.
  - 59. Vitra has no adequate remedy at law.
- 60. Vitra requests judgment declaring and directing what must be done to cure the defaults alleged in the 2019 Notice of Default to enable Vitra to protect its valuable, long-term

tenancy, and preliminary and permanently enjoining, staying and tolling the expiration of the

curative period therefor to afford Vitra an adequate opportunity to cure the same.

## AS AND FOR A THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

- 61. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 60 as though more fully set forth at length herein.
- 62. NYC Administrative Code § 22-902 prohibits a landlord from harassing a commercial tenant.
- 63. Landlord's persistent and ongoing misconduct since the inception of the Lease, culminating in the frivolous 2019 Notice of Default, constitutes harassment under NYC Administrative Code §22-902.
- 64. As a result of Landlord's harassment, civil penalties pursuant to Administrative Code § 22-903 should be imposed on Landlord.
- 65. Furthermore, this Court should award such other relief as the court deems appropriate, including but not limited to punitive damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and court costs.

### AS AND FOR A FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

- 66. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 65 as though more fully set forth at length herein.
- 67. Vitra has notified Landlord of a leak from the Landlord's second floor courtyard roof into a portion of Vitra's ground floor premises.

68. Pursuant to Article 4 of the Lease, Landlord "shall maintain and repair the pubic portions of the building, both exterior and interior."

- 69. Landlord has failed and refused to repair the leak located within its portion of the Building.
  - 70. As a result of the foregoing, Landlord has breached the Lease.
- 71. As a result of Landlord's breach, Vitra has and will sustain significant damage to its newly refurbished premises in an amount to be determined at trial, but not less than \$1,000,000.00.

### AS AND FOR A FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

- 72. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 71 as though more fully set forth at length herein.
- 73. Pursuant to Article 4 of the Lease, Landlord has a duty to maintain the public portions of the Building, whether exterior or interior.
- 74. Landlord has negligently failed to maintain the public portions of the Building by, among other things, failing to repair the leak from the second floor courtyard roof into Vitra's ground floor premises.
- 75. As a result of Landlord's negligence, Vitra has sustained, and will sustain, damages to its newly refurbished premises.
- 76. Based upon the foregoing, Vitra has been damaged in an amount to be determined at trial, but not less than \$1,000,000.00.

AS AND FOR A SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

77. Vitra repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation set forth in

Paragraphs 1 through 76 as though more fully set forth at length herein.

78. Landlord has an obligation to repair the leak that exists from the second floor

courtyard into a portion of Vitra's ground floor premises.

79. Upon information and belief, Landlord disputes the foregoing.

80. There is thus a dispute as to the respective rights and obligations by and between

Landlord and Vitra pursuant to the Lease.

81. Because of such dispute, a judicial determination and declaration as to the

respective rights of the parties is desirable and necessary.

82. Vitra has no adequate remedy at law.

83. Vitra requests judgment declaring that Landlord is required to comply with its

obligations under the Lease and repair the leak from the second floor courtyard into a portion of

Vitra's ground floor premises.

WHEREFORE, Vitra requests judgment against Landlord as follows:

A. On the First Cause of Action, declaring that the Notice of Default is defective,

null and void, and/or of no force and effect, and/or is insufficient to constitute a notice of default

or notice to cure predicate to a notice terminating the Lease, and preliminarily and permanently

enjoining and restraining Landlord, its principals, officers, agents and employees, and anyone

acting by, through or under Landlord, from taking any action, issuing any notice and/or

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commencing any action or proceeding to terminate the Lease or to remove or evict Vitra from the Premises on any of the grounds set forth in the Notice of Default.

- B. On the Second Cause of Action, declaring and directing what must be done to cure the defaults alleged in the Notice of Default to enable Vitra to protect its valuable, long-term tenancy, and preliminary and permanently enjoining, staying and tolling the expiration of the curative period therefor to afford Vitra an adequate opportunity to cure the same.
- C. On the Third Cause of Action, the imposition of civil penalties pursuant to Administrative Code § 22-903, together with punitive damages and reasonable attorneys' fees and court costs.
- D. On the Fourth Cause of Action, damages in an amount to be determined at trial, but not less than \$1,000,000.00.
- E. On the Fifth Cause of Action, damages in an amount to be determined at trial, but not less than \$1,000,000.00.
- F. On the Sixth Cause of Action, declaring that Landlord is required to comply with its obligations under the Lease and repair the leak from the second floor courtyard into a portion of Vitra's ground floor premises.

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G. Together with such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper.

Dated: New York, New York September 17, 2019

# SILLS CUMMIS & GROSS P.C.

Attorneys for Plaintiff Vitra, Inc.

FILED: NEW YORK COUNTY CLERK 09/18/2019 09:47 AM INDEX NO. 655408/2019

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### VERIFICATION

| STATE OF NEW YORK  | )    |
|--------------------|------|
|                    | )SS. |
| COUNTY OF NEW YORK | )    |

Melissa Shelton, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

- 1. I am the President of Vitra, Inc., the Plaintiff herein.
- 2. I have read the foregoing Complaint and know the contents thereof; the same are true to my own knowledge, except as to those matters upon information and belief; and as to those matters, I believe them to be true. The basis of such information and belief are my own knowledge, and the books and records maintained by Plaintiff, and its agents and employees.
- 3. This verification is made by me and not by Plaintiff because the Plaintiff is a corporation such that an individual with knowledge must verify on its behalf.

MELISSA SHELTON

Sworn to before me this

17th day of September, 2019

Notary Public

DAVID M ZIDEK JR

NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF NEW YORK

No. 01ZI6394330

Qualified in New York County

My Commission Expires 07-01-2023

# EXHIBIT 5

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JAMS ARBITRATION

VITRA, INC.,

Claimant,

-and-

JAMS No. 1425024190

NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, L.P.,

Respondent.

#### INTERIM AWARD

The undersigned Arbitrator, having been designated pursuant to a stipulation of settlement in open court on December 7, 2017, in Vitra, Inc. v Ninety-Five Madison Company, L.P. ("the Action") then pending in Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York under Index No. 652342/2017, (hereinafter "Settlement Agreement") and pursuant to a stipulation after mediation waiving any conflicts from the circumstance that the undersigned acted as mediator before the action was settled, and having read the written statements and affidavits with exhibits submitted by the parties, and having conducted oral argument on May 14, 2018, does hereby find, conclude and AWARD as follows:

The Claimant, referred to in the papers as Plaintiff, as it once was, seeks, under the Settlement Agreement and its arbitration provisions, a declaration that the lease dated June 16, 2016 ("the Lease") is terminated by rescission or because of constructive

eviction, or, alternatively, to have the Arbitrator appoint a receiver to exercise all of Landlord's authority with respect to the premises being leased by the Claimant. In addition, the Claimant seeks certain forms of damages.

The Respondent opposes the claims insisting that it never agreed in the Settlement Agreement to submit to arbitration the issue of terminating the Lease or appointing a receiver. In effect, it argues that the claims are not arbitrable. Moreover, the Lease itself limits the Claimant's remedies as tenant to specific performance or an injunction.

Before considering the additional forms of relief for damages or seeking remedies for the landlord's alleged obstruction, the Arbitrator will deal with the issue of arbitrability.

#### ARBITRABILITY

Paragraph Twenty-eight of the Settlement Agreement reads as follows:

Any and all disputes arising out of or relating to the interpretation and enforcement of this stipulation and tenant's alterations prior to the opening - prior to tenant's substantially opening for business -- ....

And all disputes arising out of or relating to the interpretation and enforcement of this stipulation and Tenant's alterations through the time tenant substantially opens for business shall be referred to the Honorable Steven [sic] Crane, as arbiter, for binding determination as provided in accordance with the rules of JAMS, and except as provided [sic]. If Justice Crane is not available or unwilling to act, Justice

Scarpulla shall resolve any such disputes. Justice Crane, Justice Scarpulla and/or any other arbiter mutually agreed to by the parties and the court shall award attorneys' fees and the costs of the dispute proceeding, including JAMS's cost [sic] and fees, to the prevailing party.

Notwithstanding, the JAMS rules or the Civil Practice Law and Rules, the parties' dispute shall be determined as follows: (A), each party shall be entitled to submit a written statement together with any affidavits and/or exhibits as they deem appropriate; (B), the parties waive any other right to present evidence at such proceeding and waive the right to conduct any discovery; (C), parties and their representatives shall have the right to appear for purposes of presenting their arguments in support of their respective positions; (D), the determination of Justice Crane, Justice Scarpulla or any other arbiter shall be final and binding upon the parties. The parties hereby waive any right to appeal any such determination; (E), judgment on any such determination may be entered in the Supreme Court of the State of New York, County of New York.

The Claimant argues that the Lease limitations to specific performance and injunction were waived when the landlord agreed to the Settlement Agreement, inter alia, in its reference to the JAMS Rules. The Claimant contends that the parties are referring to the JAMS Comprehensive Rules effective July 1, 2014. Rule 11 authorizes the Arbitrator to resolve arbitrability disputes. Rule 24(c) authorizes the Arbitrator to "grant any remedy or relief that is just and equitable and within the scope of the Parties' agreement, including, but not limited to, specific performance of a contract or any other equitable or legal remedy."

while the Arbitrator agrees with the Claimant that his powers in rendering an Award are broad, and not limited to the remedies specified in the Lease, they must be "within the scope of the Parties' agreement." The Settlement Agreement limits the disputes the Arbitrator may determine to "the interpretation and enforcement of this agreement..." So, let us look more closely at the Settlement Agreement.

First of all, the Settlement Agreement settled all claims and counterclaims in the Action. It then addressed the Lease between the parties and various areas of friction that led to the Action. The Settlement Agreement embodied Respondent-Landlord's approval of Claimant-Tenant's plans dated May 12, 2017; Respondent's undertaking to sign documentation required by the Department of Buildings ("DOB") to issue a permit under these plans; Claimant's promise to pay all items of rent and additional rent starting January 1, 2018; a provision for arbitrating real estate escalation; Respondent's approval of installation of sub-meters to be programmed by a designated entity with a procedure for averaging the first two months of actual billing to determine monthly electric charges retroactive to June 1, 2016, followed by a true-up; a provision for expenditure of Tenant's Work in the amount of \$1,912,500 unless Landlord's Work is not completed by December 31,

2017, in which case the Claimant would have nine months from actual completion of Landlord's Work to expend and pay the \$1,912,500; a rent credit of \$506,250; a lease extension; the Respondent's acknowledgment that the dumbwaiter is part of the Claimant's premises; Claimant's undertaking to provide the Respondent with required language for the scope of work for each ACP-5 required for Tenant's Work; notification provisions when certain steps have been accomplished; and an undertaking that the Respondent would install its future lobby air conditioning unit and ductwork in the existing interconnecting stairway. There were other details of similar tenor covered by the remainder of the Settlement Agreement.

It is clear that the Settlement Agreement settled the nine causes of action alleged by the Claimant and the two Counterclaims of the Respondent. Notable is the ninth cause of action in which the Claimant sought a declaration that the Lease was terminated and demanded a return of all monies it had expended including its security deposit.

The Arbitrator concludes that his authority under paragraph twenty-eight of the Settlement Agreement allows him (1) to interpret and enforce the Settlement Agreement and determine

There was a further provision in paragraph twenty-three relating to the completion of Landlord's Work. If the dunnage to the courtyard roof and Landlord's Work were not completed by April 15 or 16, 2018, then the Claimant's rent would be abated daily.

disputes relating thereto, and (2) to entertain disputes relating to Tenant's alterations until the Claimant substantially opens for business. The claim for termination of the Lease for the Respondent's frustration of its purpose or for any other reason such as constructive eviction was settled in the Settlement Agreement. Rather, in interpreting the Settlement Agreement, the Arbitrator holds that he is limited to the items, generally construction-oriented, that it sets forth. These items exclude, by way of settlement, the right to dispute the continued viability of the Lease for the Respondent's continuing, frustrating behavior.

On the other hand, the Respondent's objection to Claimant's alternative request for the appointment of a limited receiver is without foundation. The Settlement Agreement specifies that if there is a conflict between the Lease and the Settlement Agreement, the latter shall control. (Paragraph Twenty-seven). The provision of Article 60 of the Lease, limiting the Tenant's remedies to injunction or specific performance, conflicts with ¶28 of the Settlement Agreement incorporating JAMS Rules. JAMS Comprehensive Rule 24(c) allows the Arbitrator to grant "any remedy or relief that is just and equitable...within the scope of the parties' agreement, including, but not limited to, specific performance...or any other equitable or legal remedy." A temporary receivership under Article 64 of the CPLR is a provisional remedy along with

attachment, injunction, and notice of pendency (CPLR 6001). It is a remedy within the sweep of Rule 24(c) and, if appropriate, the Respondent subjected itself to such a remedy when agreeing to arbitration in the Settlement Agreement—as long as the dispute itself arises out of or relates to the interpretation and enforcement of the Settlement Agreement or Tenant's alterations prior to opening.

Accordingly, the Claimant's claims for termination of the Lease and a declaration of constructive eviction resulting in the same termination are denied as not arbitrable.

#### TEMPORARY RECEIVERSHIP

This equitable remedy is, as discussed above, available to redress the grievances the Claimant presents about the Respondent's unresponsiveness and obstructionism. In exercising his discretion, the Arbitrator will hold in abeyance the Claimant's application for the appointment of a Temporary Receiver to take on the Landlord's obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives in the oversight and approval of Tenant's alterations until it opens for business, pending the faithful and timely observation by the Respondent of its exercise of these obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives. Provision will be made for the renewal on short notice of Claimant's application for such a Receiver in the event any further violation of the Respondent's obligations, of

prerogatives and responsibilities relating to Tenant's alterations.

#### TREBLE DAMAGES

Claimant is seeking \$31,735.89 in damages pursuant to RPAPL \$853 representing compensation tripled for the nine days during which it was evicted in March, 2018, at the rate of \$1,175.40 per day. The Respondent repeats the excuse it used to justify the original lock-out in March which the Arbitrator then rejected in directing that the Claimant be restored to possession. This excuse was that the Respondent and its contractor were concerned for the safety of others who might be in the premises during construction of a brick wall. The Respondent contends that no damages for the lockout period should be awarded because it was protecting the Claimant and its representatives from injury.

Having rejected the Respondent's excuse previously, along with its observation that the contractor, whose insurance would not cover the tenant's injuries, the Arbitrator is constrained to award the Claimant its actual damages of \$10,578.632 trebled, due to the Respondent's flagrantly unlawful behavior in changing the Tenant's locks, bereft of common decency or legal justification. The Claimant is, thus, awarded \$31,735.89 with interest at 9% per annum from March 20, 2018, until paid.

This is derived from the monthly rent of \$36,437.50 divided by 31 days to make the daily rent \$1,175.40. The Respondent, on the other hand, has divided by 30 days for a larger loss figure for the nine days of \$10,931.25.

# RESPONDENT'S NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT Electrical Billing

The Claimant asserts that the temporary sub-meter was installed on January 19, 2018, but the Respondent has thwarted its electrical consultant in providing Claimant the meter readings and billing. Paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the Settlement Agreement address sub-metering and the procedure for averaging Claimant's electric consumption. There was to be a retroactive adjustment in the charges from June 1, 2016, on the basis of the meter readings with a requirement that the Respondent pay the Claimant's overpayments on April 1, 2018, by way of rent credits the following month. Therefore, Claimant's utility consultant took readings and made calculations for which the Claimant should have been billed for monthly electric charges of \$354.89 per month or \$8,517.36 for the retrospective 24 months - June 2016 through May 2018. Respondent had billed and Claimant paid \$108,951.75 for this period. It claims a refund owing of \$100,434.39.

The Respondent contends that a \$75,000.00 tapping fee for Claimant's extra amperage must be credited against the \$108,951.75 leaving a balance from which the actual amount of usage between June 18, 2016 and April 10, 2018, of \$11,934.48, should be deducted. This results in a rent credit to Claimant of \$22,917.27.

In reply, the Claimant points out that the Respondent's consultant's computations fail to comply with the Settlement

Agreement in that it averages consumption over sixty days instead of the average of billing for the two months after installation of the sub-meter. Further the Respondent's consultant adds a monthly meter reading charge and building taxes. The sub-meter was not read for 20 months and charges for reading or for taxes are not provided for in the Settlement Agreement. Finally, there is no provision in the Lease for a tap in fee, and Claimant never agreed to one. The Claimant is responsible only for the actual cost of installing additional risers and equipment.

The Respondent's consultant's figures are not in conformity with the Settlement Agreement. The diminution of the Respondent's grossly excessive overcharges for electricity by a tap in fee is not in conformity with Article 46(H) of the Lease. Accordingly, the Claimant is entitled to diminish its rent and additional rent payments in the sum of \$100,434.39.

## Landlord's Work and Landlord's Construction

The Claimant complains that the Landlord's Work was supposed to have been completed by December 31, 2017, and that it refuses to provide a schedule of completion that would permit Claimant to inspect and begin planning its own work. As of April 17, 2018, the Claimant asserts that the Landlord's Construction was not completed thereby abating rent. Here also Claimant complains that the Respondent has not provided Claimant with any plans which it needs for its air conditioning unit.

The Respondent asserts that its Landlord's Work was completed on April 24, 2018. Therefore, Claimant is entitled to a nine-day abatement in rent of \$10,578.63 for Respondent's failure to complete its work on time. The Respondent attributes the Claimant's contest of the completion of Landlord's Work to the need for third party inspections, a walk through and DOB signoffs. The Respondent establishes that the inspections have been performed and a letter of completion was issued by the DOB. Nevertheless, it argues that none of these subsequent conditions is required by the Settlement Agreement or the Lease. In contrast, Article 56(A)(x) of the Lease imposes such an obligation on the Claimant, i.e., approvals by DOB and "as built" plans.

Accordingly, the Respondent has established the date of completion of Landlord's Work and Landlord's Construction and, indeed, has delivered the dunnage plans to the Claimant at the Arbitrator's request. The Claimant is accordingly entitled to \$10,578.63 as an abatement of rent for the period of delay in the Respondent's completion as authorized in paragraph 23 of the Settlement Agreement.

#### Electrical Connections

The Settlement Agreement at paragraph 17 required the Respondent to designate on Tenant's plans the location in the basement where the Claimant was to connect its electrical service. The Claimant claims that Respondent caused it extra expense,

without showing what this consisted of, for changing the designation made on January 29, 2018, for electrical connections to a different location on February 25 requiring revision of plans.

The Respondent explains that both parties retained electrical consultants who met concerning the riser and panel plans. The first location was designated subject to verification of capacity by the Claimant's consultant. He determined that different risers had to be used, and the consultants worked together to designate the final selection. That the experts were delayed in getting the electrical connection location correct does not make the Respondent responsible.

For lack of any quantifiable damages and Claimant's failure to attribute the relocation solely to Respondent, this claim will be dismissed.

#### Handicapped Ramp

Paragraph 22 of the Settlement Agreement obligated the Claimant to design and construct, at Respondent's expense, a ramp that was ADA compliant. The Claimant was to provide the Respondent with a statement of expected cost. The Claimant proclaims that it satisfied these obligations on January 18, 2018. The Respondent had 30 days to select a competitive bid; otherwise, the Claimant could proceed with its vendor. The Claimant alleges that the Respondent did not respond within these 30 days, so Claimant hired its own vendor as provided in the Settlement Agreement. Claimant

advised Respondent that it had missed the date for a competitive bid. Thereafter, the Respondent refused to consent to the work because the design was oblivious to a penetration test result showing inadequate supporting stone. The Respondent never shared the report of the penetration test with Claimant.

The Respondent asserts that it accepted as its total cost obligation the Claimant's total cost for an ADA compliant ramp and related stone work. Apparently the cost was predicated on Claimant's engineer's plans from May 15, 2017,3 but these contemplated a single door. The Respondent reports that Landmarks4 requires two doors. In view of this requirement new plans and their review are allegedly necessary. It also claims that engineer Silman requested that a test probe be done to determine the depth of the underlying stone; Silman determined that stone needed replacing and new plans were required. Respondent avers that no new plans have yet been submitted.

In reply, the Claimant asserts that the Landmarks Commission has given preliminary approval to the Claimant's plan including

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Actually, Paragraph 1 of the Settlement Agreement provided that the Respondent approved the Claimant's plans with the date May 12, 2017, and paragraph 2 obligated the Respondent to sign all necessary documents required by DOB for issuance of a permit with respect to these plans within three business days.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Claimant alleges that on December 7, 2017, when the Settlement Agreement was made, Ms. Sklar of the Respondent knew of the imminent Landmarks designation and had cooperated in achieving it, all while concealing the possibility from the Claimant and the court.

for handicapped accessibility, subject only to supplying shop drawings.

Since the Respondent in Paragraph 1 of the Settlement Agreement has reviewed and approved the Claimant's May 12, 2017, plans and proclaims that it approved the ADA compliant ramp, nothing more from the Respondent is necessary. The change from one door to two doors at the behest of the Landmarks Commission not only is to be laid at the Respondent's feet, but it appears that Landmarks has approved the Tenant's ramp design in any event. No further Landlord approval is required until shop drawings are created by the subcontractor. The Respondent has not supplied to the Claimant the results of the penetration test and is hereby directed to do so.

#### Elevator Work

The Respondent delayed the progress of elevator work by demanding certificates of insurance that Claimant contends were not required by Article 58 of the Lease. Nonetheless, certificates satisfactory to the Respondent were supplied. Secondly, the Respondent has not responded to Claimant's list of proposed contractors nor recommended elevator contractors as paragraph 19 obligated Respondent to do by January 15, 2018. Finally, the Respondent has not supplied a proper line drawing of the new elevator control room, related walkway and adjacent elevator lobby by January 31, 2018, as required by paragraph 16 of the Settlement

Agreement. At an April 10 hearing before the Arbitrator the Respondent submitted two alternative drawings whereas Claimant needs a single definitive drawing.

The Respondent blames the Claimant for delays in the elevator It accuses the Claimant of delay in retaining Jenkins & work. Huntington, named in paragraph 19 of the Settlement Agreement, which had previously inspected the shaftway and pit and drew plans. Apparently the Claimant did not obtain a price proposal until April. The Claimant has not paid the \$5,000 deposit for plans to The Respondent also refutes the lack of authority in be drawn. the Lease for demanding certificates of insurance. Articles 3 and and 56(A)(vii) are the sources for the request for certificates. Lastly, Respondent contends that Claimant was given a line drawing before December 7, 2017, the date of the Settlement Agreement. Because Claimant complained about the lack of a line drawing the Respondent provided a new one. To the extent there is a difference in the new line drawing from the earlier one, Respondent undertakes to provide a single, authoritative drawing.

Paragraph 19 crafted а default if the Respondent's representative, Wexler, did not supply names contractors acceptable to the Claimant. Wexler did not. default was Archstone. Therefore, Archstone is deemed the general contractor for the elevator work contemplated in paragraph 19. Secondly, the Respondent shall provide a single, authoritative line drawing as required by paragraph 16 of the Settlement Agreement within five (5) business days of the date of this INTERIM AWARD. Lastly, any claim the Claimant predicates on the delay from the disagreement over certificates of insurance is academic since the Claimant provided satisfactory certificates to the Respondent.

#### Permitting

The Settlement Agreement in paragraph 2 states "Landlord shall sign all necessary documentation required by the Department of Buildings for the issuance of a permit with respect to the May 12, 2017 plans within three business days of being provided such The Claimant learned that the building was documentation." designated a landmark on February 5. It coordinated directly with the Landmarks Commission about requirements for design of the entry way and obtained informal approval. So, the original plans were modified accordingly and on March 12 the Commission informally approved subject to receipt of the application signed by the Respondent Landlord and Claimant's submission of shop drawings On February 22, 2018, Claimant submitted the when prepared. application which Respondent first ignored and then refused to sign until five copies of drawings required by the Lease were Ms. Sklar also objected because some boxes on the application had not been checked. And, she required details that only the shop drawings could supply, drawings that could not be created until DOB approved the plans and issued a permit. This standoff was resolved in the hearing before the undersigned on April 10, 2018. The parties agreed on the form and contents of the application to Landmarks and on the drawings that would be attached. In violation of that agreement, Ms. Sklar altered the application without the Claimant's approval and submitted it without notice to Claimant's representative who wanted to be present at the filing.

The Respondent reverts to the single door contained in the May 12, 2017, plans that were approved in the Settlement Agreement (already discussed in connection with the Handicapped Ramp). The Respondent suggests that Claimant resubmit the plans without the storefront work and later submit the storefront for Respondent's review in accordance with Exhibit K of the Lease and its procedures. It contends that even if Landmarks blessed Claimant's modified plans, this does not preempt the Respondent's right to review and approve in its discretion.

The Respondent asserts that the Arbitrator on April 13 confirmed the Respondent's right of approval despite Landmarks approval. This may or may not be accurate but need not be addressed here because the Respondent will be seeing the shop drawings and may have rights to make objections at that time.

The Respondent approved the May 12 plans and obligated itself to sign all necessary documentation required by DOB to issue a permit with respect to them within three business days. If this conflicts with Exhibit K of the Lease, the Settlement Agreement provisions control (\$\bigle 27\$). The Respondent has not argued that the application to the Landmarks Commission falls outside of "all necessary documentation required by the Department of Buildings for the issuance of a permit with respect to the May 12, 2017 plans." Consequently, the Arbitrator presumes that the Landmarks application and its contents are embraced by paragraph 2 of the Settlement Agreement.

Accordingly, it is declared that the Respondent has reviewed and approved of the Landmarks application and its contents and that the Respondent will have no further approval rights with respect thereto until shop drawings are created and submitted to it.

#### RESPONDENT'S CONTINUING BAD FAITH

The Claimant piles on to the alleged violations of the Settlement Agreement and other alleged misbehavior of the Respondent and its sole representative, Rita Sklar, suggesting they are obstructing Claimant in remodeling and opening. As an example, it refers to Ms. Sklar's absolute refusal to communicate with Claimant's representative, Nate Rubin and refusal to respond to his phone, fax and hand-delivered inquiries.

The response is that Mr. Rubin has treated the Respondent and its professionals with disdain and verbal abuse. Respondent says

it and they will continue to work with him despite large unpaid bills he and Claimant owe to the professionals who continue to move the work forward. If issues arise, they can be arbitrated.

The Arbitrator deems this portion of the Claimant's presentation to represent support for its application for a termination of the Lease, already found to be beyond the scope of the arbitration clause in the Settlement Agreement.

#### RESPONDENT'S REFERENCES TO THE CLAIMANT'S DEFAULT UNDER THE LEASE

To the extent the Respondent's papers are replete with references to Claimant's failure to commence Tenant's Work and to its general contractor's directive to furlough all work on May 2, 2018, the Respondent has asked for no relief. Therefore, there is no occasion at this juncture for the Arbitrator to dispose of the default issue. Whether or not there was a default, the Arbitrator issued a Yellowstone injunction on consent. The alleged default may become academic when the Claimant begins its work. Because the Settlement Agreement in paragraph 9 affords the Claimant until September 30, 2018, or nine months after the completion of Landlord's Work, to spend \$1,912,500, the Claimant may not even be in default.

#### CONCLUSION

Any argument not addressed in this INTERIM AWARD was found to be unavailing, without merit, academic or unnecessary to reach.

The Arbitrator concludes and AWARDS as follows:

- 1. The Respondent's objection to the arbitrability of the Claimant's claim for termination of the Lease is sustained, and the claims for termination of the Lease and declaration of a constructive eviction resulting in termination are dismissed as beyond the scope of the arbitration agreement in the Settlement Agreement.
- 2. The Respondent's objection to the arbitrability of the Claimant's alternative claim for the appointment of a temporary receiver is overruled and that claim is declared to be arbitrable under the Settlement Agreement.
- 3. The Claimant's claim for the appointment of a limited and temporary receiver to take on the Landlord's obligations, responsibilities and prerogatives in the oversight and approval of Tenant's alterations until it opens for business, is held in abeyance pending the faithful and timely observation by the Respondent of its exercise of these obligations, prerogatives and responsibilities. In the event of the Respondent's violation of these obligations, prerogatives and responsibilities, the Claimant is hereby granted leave, on three (3) days' notice, to renew the application being held in abeyance.
- 4. Claimant's claim for treble damages for actual eviction is hereby granted and the Respondent is directed to pay to the

- Claimant the sum of \$31,735.89 with interest at 9% per annum from March 20, 2018, until paid.
- 5. The Claimant's claim for rent credit for overcharges for electricity is granted, and the Claimant is entitled to diminish its rent and additional rent payments in the sum of \$100,434.39.
- 6. The Claimant's claim for an abatement of rent for the period of delay in the Respondent's completion of Landlord's Work and Landlord's Construction is granted in the amount of \$10,578.63.
- 7. The Claimant's claim with respect to electrical connections is denied and this claim is dismissed.
- 8. The Claimant's claim regarding the handicapped ramp is granted and it is DECLARED that no further submission nor approval to the Respondent is required until shop drawing are created by the subcontractor; and the Respondent is hereby directed to supply to the Claimant the results of the penetration test within three (3) business days of the date of this INTERIM AWARD.
- 9. The Claimant' claim respecting elevator work is granted to the following extent and otherwise denied as academic, and Archstone is deemed to be the general contractor for this work; and the Respondent is hereby directed to provide the Claimant with a single, authoritative line drawing as

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required by paragraph 16 of the Settlement Agreement within five (5) business days of the date of this INTERIM AWARD.

10. The Claimant's claim with respect to the Landmarks
Commission application and permitting is granted and it is
DECLARED that the Respondent has reviewed and approved of the
Landmarks application and its contents and that the
Respondent will have no further approval rights with respect
thereto until shop drawings are created and submitted to it.

Stephen G. Crane, Arbitrator

State of New York )

SS:

County of New York)

I, Stephen G. Crane, do hereby affirm upon my oath as Arbitrator that I am the individual described in and who executed this instrument which is my INTERIM AWARD.

JUNE 18, 2018

Date

Stephen G. Crane

#### PROOF OF SERVICE BY EMAIL & U.S. MAIL

Re: Vitra, Inc. vs. Ninety Five Madison Company, L.P. Reference No. 1425024190

I, Annie Goodwin, not a party to the within action, hereby declare that on June 19, 2018, I served the attached Interim Award on the parties in the within action by Email and by depositing true copies thereof enclosed in sealed envelopes with postage thereon fully prepaid, in the United States Mail, at New York, NEW YORK, addressed as follows:

Mr. David F. Segal
Sills Cummis & Gross P.C
101 Park Avenue
28th Floor
New York, NY 10178
Phone: 212-643-7000
dsegal@sillscummis.com
Parties Represented:
Vitra, Inc.

Richard Feldman Esq.
Stephen M. Rosenberg Esq.
Rosenberg Feldman Smith, LLP
551 Fifth Avenue
24th Floor
New York, NY 10176
Phone: 212- 682-3454
rfeldman@rfs-law.com
SRosenberg@rfs-law.com
Parties Represented:
Ninety Five Madison Company, L.P.

Mr. Mark Levenson
Sills Cummis & Gross P.C.
One Riverfront Plaza
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: 973-643-7000
mlevenson@sillscummis.com
Parties Represented:
Vitra, Inc.

I declare under penalty of perjury the foregoing to be true and correct. Executed at New York, NEW YORK on June 19, 2018.

Annie Goodwin

agoodwin@jamsadr.com

# **EXHIBIT 6**

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#### PROOF OF SERVICE BY EMAIL & U.S. MAIL

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Partie Represented

Villa, Inc.

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Vontil Lone LLP

13 Riversite Ave

Wingon / CT (0000)

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Joshi via Vorolidamicano

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# EXHIBIT 7

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| JAMS ARBITRATION<br>NEW YORK, NEW YORK |  |
|--|--|
| VPPRA, INC.,  against-                 | JAMS NO. 1425024190<br>laimant,<br>ORDER |
| NINETY-PIVE MADISON COMPAN             | Y, L.P.                                  |
| R                                      | espondent.                               |

After considering arguments heard in telephone conference valls on October 11, 15, 22 20 and 10, 2018, it is hereby **ORDERED** 

- Claimant will begin providing the Construction Cost Statements and related documents, as provided for in the Lease beginning on November 13, 2018, and continuing on or about the 15th day of each month thereafter until the sum of \$1,912,500 in costs as returned to in Article 78 of the Lease, has been paid).
- In consideration of Respondent having withdrawn all claims to freight elevator charges during Outober 2018, upon presentation of bills from Respondent, Claiman; will promptly pay for two treight elevator charges, approved to writing by Nate Rubin and Archstone, respectively, each in the sum of \$250.00, for an aggregate sum of \$500.00;
- Lense. Archstone and its subcontenuous shall have access to all areas of Building associated with Chairmant's Initial Alterations including, but not limited to, the basement sub-basement and bathroom in the basement, the 2nd floor courtward roof, and the third floor (with respect to the inter-floor elevator) when needed and without conditions, on weekdays between 8 mm, and 5 p.m., during which times the freight elevator shall also be available. Additionally, Archistone

will endeavor to provide two (2) business days advance notice to Respondent, for work on weekands when required by Archstone. If an emergency or argent situation arises, Landord shall use to best efforts to provide access and shorter time period:

- Superintendent of Archstone daily, for the nack Marcase Estateanse D) of the Building by 8 m.,
  for such access. The provisions of the Lause regarding bringing materials into the Pramises
  remain in officer;
- Duillies I.I.C ("Arelisome") (but if mease from the 29th Street entrance to the Building is espared between 11010 a.m. and 12:40 p.m. Archstone will provide the personnel to begintate same at its expanse. Notwithstanding the foregoing, should Archstone issue a charge for that personnel, such along shull be borne solely by Landlord;
  - (d) Access to and through the Building shall be without charge to Clauman;
- (c) Claimant shall advise Archstone that is shall along all public areas used to
  contractors or subcommercian by 5:00 p.m. on a daily basis; and
- (1) (Cospondent shall provide egress through the 29th Street door of the Building to 29th Street at all times that contractors and protosatonals are in the Building;
- All future certificates of insurance, as well as renewals or amendments of certificates of insurance, will be reviewed by Respondent or its representatives who shall provide the results of each review to Claimant's representatives within a reasonable period of time under the obsumestances after they have been delivered to Respondent or its designated representative penerally not to exceed two (2) bosiness days. The review of all such insurance certificates shall be at Respondent a sole cost and expense:

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The weekly incertings that Claimant is prepared to participate in arc letterary and the only expected attendees are fortunated Rubin, Run Skaar and Archstone. These meetings are to be used solely for the purposes of reporting on the progress of construction, discuss issues that have arisen Jooordination, and requests for information, and any other topics manually agreed to, and will generally not exceed 66 minutes in duration. During such meetings, Archstone has agreed to provide Respondent with a two week "look-alreed" unfolgated cheanle asgurding forthorous construction, in the form previously invested. Fifther party has the right to causel such meetings in the future without recourse.

- Kespandon) shall not have any direct communications with Archaeons its Moneys or its abcontractors. If no issue arises that is of concern to Respondent, Respondent shall first speak with, or send a fax to Kathaniel Rubin, Chimant's project manager, describing the issue. Nathaniel Rubin has agreed to be generally available, on respondent notice, to speak and communicate with Respondent, and attempt to address any issues Respondent has regarding Chimant's butto. Afternations. If the Issue is not resolved with Mr Rubin within a reasonable period of time, Respondent shall coupley the protocol for relating issues during construction of provided for in the Supulation of Settlement.
- 7 Chainsair has the right, at its sole cost and expense, to engage the services of Candon Special Inspectors as its independent, third-party inspector. Respondent has the right to have Skyline Engineering, its independent, third-party inspector, present for such inspection.
- 8. Claimant's attorneys shall, within seven days from notice of a joint request from Expan.
  Richard Feldman, Exq. and Robert Lankson. Exq., and receiving the necessary information and/or manimum tation. Joposit the sum of \$154.359.85, representing the full extent of the charging ben

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asserted by Respondent's former atomicys, Rosenberg Jodannin Smith LLP, with the Clerk of the Court in the action commenced by said firm against Respondent, in Supreme Court. New York County, bearing Index No. 65(1951/2018). Open such deposit being made. Claimon will be deemed to have complied with its obligations for the payment of and through October 2018 to the extent of such payment.

- As agreed to in the July 37, 3018 hearing before the Arbitanor, each side, without exception, will provide the other's attorney with at least one ausiness may notice in advance of any communication with Landmarks Proscription Commission ("LPC") in order to allow the other party on opportunity to properly participate in such communication.
- Respondent has stated that it is in the process of engaging Architom, at Respondent's sole cost and expense, to perform cenain duet work construction from Respondent's new domining wall into the Lobby of the Building (the "Duot Work Construction"). Claimant has agreed to allow Archstone access to the Premise of order to incitate such Duet Work Construction, provided that Archstone completes same no later than November 30, 2018. After November 30, 2018. After November 30, 2018, After November 30, 2018, and Archstone will be completing the installation of Viria's wall in the vicinity of Respondent's New Demising Wall, and Archstone will not have access through Claimants' Premises to complete the Duer Work Construction.
- Objections thereto, are reserved to the parties for a future hosting.

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12. Where Respondent's cooperation, request for information and/or coordination is requested by Claimant's representatives. Respondent shall respond and/or agree to meet within one (1) business thay, and in all respects to promptly facilitate the construction, without imposing conditions for same, but without prejudice to the claims of the parties as to the financial obligation and responsibility therefor, and the right to submit those claims to the Arbitmtor for resolution.

13. Except to the extent expressly set forth in this Stepulation, Claimant and Respondent expressly reserve all of their rights, remedies and claims against each other whother or not previously asserted, including but not timued to, costs, expenses and attorneys' this

14. To the extent any of the terms and conditions of this Supelseron conflict with the terms and conditions of the Supulation of Settlement, the terms and conditions of the Supulation of Settlement shall prevail.

Dutod: November 2. 2018

Stephen G. Crane, Arbitrator

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# **EXHIBIT 8**

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### **EXHIBIT 9**

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### **EXHIBIT 10**

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### **EXHIBIT 11**

#### **Jason Teele**

From: Gregory A. Kopacz

Sent: Monday, April 5, 2021 8:21 PM

To: Gregory A. Kopacz

Subject: FW: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

From: Joshua N. Howley <jhowley@sillscummis.com>

Sent: Wednesday, January 15, 2020 9:59 AM To: Robert Laplaca <rlaplaca@verrill-law.com> Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Rob, I'm following up again. If Landlord if refusing to provide the information just say so. In that event, Vitra will decide whether to commence a new lawsuit against Landlord.

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm





One Riverfront Plaza, Newark, NJ 07102 p (973) 643-5341 | m (201) 736-2344 | f (973) 643-6500 map

101 Park Avenue, 28th Floor, New York, NY 10178 p (212) 643-7000 | f (212) 643-6500 map

From: Joshua N. Howley < jhowley@sillscummis.com>

Sent: Tuesday, January 7, 2020 7:12 PM

To: Robert Laplaca <rlaplaca@verrill-law.com> Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Hi Rob – following up. Thank you.

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



website | bio | vCard | newsroom | email | f in



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101 Park Avenue, 28th Floor, New York, NY 10178 p (212) 643-7000 | f (212) 643-6500 map

From: Robert Laplaca <rlaplaca@verrill-law.com>

Sent: Friday, January 3, 2020 4:28 PM

To: Joshua N. Howley < jhowley@sillscummis.com> Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

#### \*\*\* External Email \*\*\*

Rita's traveling and back on Tuesday. I'll get you then.

Rob

#### Robert Laplaca PARTNER

33 Riverside Avenue Westport, CT 06880 T (203) 222-3110

rlaplaca@verrill-law.com http://www.verrill-law.com/robert-laplaca/ http://www.verrill-law.com/you-might-be-a-winner





From: Joshua N. Howley [mailto:jhowley@sillscummis.com]

Sent: Friday, January 3, 2020 4:26 PM

To: Robert Laplaca <rlaplaca@verrilldana.com> Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Rob, I'm following up. I would appreciate a status update.

### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



website | bio | vCard | newsroom | email | fin



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p (212) 643-7000 | f (212) 643-6500 map

From: Joshua N. Howley < <a href="mailto:jhowley@sillscummis.com">jhowley@sillscummis.com</a>>

Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2019 2:09 PM
To: Robert Laplaca < rlaplaca@verrill-law.com >
Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com >

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Rob – I would appreciate the requested information by Friday. Thank you.

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



website | bio | vCard | newsroom | email | fin

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101 Park Avenue, 28th Floor, New York, NY 10178 p (212) 643-7000 | f (212) 643-6500 map

From: Robert Laplaca < <a href="mailto:riaplaca@verrill-law.com">riaplaca@verrill-law.com</a>>
Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2019 1:52 PM

**To:** Joshua N. Howley < <u>ihowley@sillscummis.com</u>> **Cc:** Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

#### \*\*\* External Email \*\*\*

Josh: Let me look into it further for you. I remind you that if you bring a lawsuit and you lose, under the lease we get attorneys' fees and its not visa versa.

Rob

#### Robert Laplaca PARTNER

33 Riverside Avenue Westport, CT 06880 **T** (203) 222-3110

rlaplaca@verrill-law.com

http://www.verrill-law.com/robert-laplaca/http://www.verrill-law.com/you-might-be-a-winner





From: Joshua N. Howley [mailto:jhowley@sillscummis.com]

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 31, 2019 1:01 PM **To:** Robert Laplaca < <a href="mailto:rlaplaca@verrilldana.com">rlaplaca@verrilldana.com</a> **Cc:** Mark Levenson < <a href="mailto:MLevenson@sillscummis.com">MLevenson@sillscummis.com</a>

Subject: FW: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Rob,

I am following up. Landlord is leaving Vitra no choice but to commence a lawsuit regarding the commingling of the security deposit.

Josh

### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



website | bio | vCard | newsroom | email | fin

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From: Joshua N. Howley < <a href="mailto:jhowley@sillscummis.com">jhowley@sillscummis.com</a>>

Sent: Friday, December 27, 2019 1:48 PMTo: Robert Laplaca < rlaplaca@verrill-law.com >Cc: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com >

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madison/Vitra

Rob,

It is unfortunate that, for reasons I cannot comprehend, Landlord continues to refuse to provide any specific information regarding the location and amount of Vitra's security deposit. I have been requesting such information for weeks. Vitra has no confidence that Landlord has maintained its security deposit in a separate trust account as required by law, and not comingled it with other funds.

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The recent attached response from M&T Bank relating to Vitra's information subpoena and restraining notice provides that M&T has "no open accounts for the debtor." Therefore, I am confused by your vague statement below that you don't believe there have been any changes since Mr. Syracuse's response. Please clarify.

I remind your that, pursuant to NY CLS Gen Oblig. § 7-103, the landlord must give notice to a tenant that pays a security deposit, specifying the name and address of the bank where such deposit is held and the amount held by the bank, which must have a place of business within the state. If a landlord does not provide timely notice to the tenant of the bank where the funds were held, pursuant to NY CLS Gen Oblig. § 7-103, it creates a rebuttable presumption that the funds are comingled.

Vitra reserves all rights and remedies in this regard, including but not limited to the filing a new lawsuit against Landlord seeking the return of the security deposit.

Josh

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



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101 Park Avenue, 28th Floor, New York, NY 10178 p (212) 643-7000 | f (212) 643-6500 map

From: Robert Laplaca <<u>rlaplaca@verrill-law.com</u>>
Sent: Thursday, December 26, 2019 10:45 AM
To: Joshua N. Howley <<u>ihowley@sillscummis.com</u>>
Cc: Mark Levenson <<u>MLevenson@sillscummis.com</u>>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madision/Vitra

#### \*\*\* External Email \*\*\*

Josh: The security deposit is not part of the arbitration. I've explained the lease provisions to you. I don't believe there have been any changes since Mr. Syracuse's response.

Rob

#### Robert Laplaca PARTNER

33 Riverside Avenue

#### 21-10529-shl Doc 15-1 Filed 04/06/21 Entered 04/06/21 18:29:20 Exhibit Declaration of Karen Stein Pg 246 of 254

Westport, CT 06880 T (203) 222-3110

rlaplaca@verrill-law.com http://www.verrill-law.com/robert-laplaca/ http://www.verrill-law.com/you-might-be-a-winner





From: Joshua N. Howley [mailto:jhowley@sillscummis.com]

Sent: Thursday, December 26, 2019 9:54 AM To: Robert Laplaca < rlaplaca@verrilldana.com > Cc: Mark Levenson < <a href="MLevenson@sillscummis.com">MLevenson@sillscummis.com</a>>

Subject: RE: Ninety-Five Madision/Vitra

Rob, I hope you had a nice Christmas. Do you intend to respond to my below email seeking an update about Vitra's security deposit? Thanks.

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm



website | bio | vCard | newsroom | email | f in



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> Rob – please see the below email from Landlord's prior counsel about Vitra's security deposit. Can you please confirm that it remains at M&T Bank in an interest bearing account? Thank you.

#### Joshua N. Howley

Member of the Firm <image001.gif>

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From: Syracuse, Vincent J. < <a href="mailto:Syracuse@thsh.com">Syracuse@thsh.com</a>>

Sent: Thursday, July 26, 2018 4:36 PM

**To:** David F. Segal < <u>dsegal@sillscummis.com</u>> **Cc:** Regelmann, Carl F. < <u>Regelmann@thsh.com</u>>

Subject: Ninety-Five Madision/Vitra

#### David,

It has come to my attention that you recently contacted M&T Bank regarding the status of the Vitra Security Deposit. I can confirm that the Vitra Security Deposit in an interest bearing account in accordance with the terms of the lease. I would appreciate it if you would direct any future inquiries regarding my client's obligations under the lease to me.

#### Vince Syracuse

Vincent J. Syracuse

Tannenbaum Helpern Syracuse & Hirschtritt LLP

900 Third Avenue

New York, New York 10022 Email: syracuse@thsh.com Tel: (212) 508-6722 Fax: (212) 656-1916 Cell: (917) 414-1057

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### **EXHIBIT 12**

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#### **Jason Teele**

From: Gregory A. Kopacz

**Sent:** Monday, April 5, 2021 7:43 PM

**To:** Gregory A. Kopacz

**Subject:** 95 Madison

From: Robert Laplaca <<u>rlaplaca@verrill-law.com</u>> **Date:** January 19, 2021 at 1:23:57 AM EST

To: Mark Levenson < MLevenson@sillscummis.com >, "Joshua N. Howley" < jhowley@sillscummis.com >

Subject: 95 Madison



#### Mark and Josh:

I understand that the Sheriff may be executing and levying upon an NFMC bank account at Rhinebeck Bank today, known as Acct no. 1110028568. It is my understanding that this account has \$166,882.75.

Please take notice that the money in this account was segregated from the Vitra security deposit account at M&T Bank last year as conditional payment of rent during the period of the governmental shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March-May 2020 which precluded construction work in the city. The Settlement Agreement at Paragraph Twenty-three provides that rent is not abated "to the extent Landlord is prevented from [installing dunnage] by force majeure" and the Lease at Article 31 provides that Landlord "may use, apply or retain the whole or any part of the security so deposited in the extent required for the payment of any rent or additional rent" without notice to Tenant. Demand at that time was not made to replenish the account.

Nevertheless, all of the funds that were withdrawn from the security account at M&T Bank were deposited in the above Rhinebeck Bank account in an interest-bearing account as provided for in the Lease at Article 55 (Security Deposit) and have not been withdrawn by Landlord.

Accordingly, if Vitra contends that Landlord had no right to access these funds for payment of rent, then Vitra should not execute on these funds. If Vitra, nevertheless, obtains these funds through execution, Landlord hereby demands, pursuant to Article 31 of the Lease, that Vitra within five (5) days pay to Landlord \$166,882.75 (or such amount executed upon from the about account) to replenish the security account.

Rob

#### Robert Laplaca PARTNER

Verrill Dana LLP 355 Riverside Avenue Westport, CT 06880 T (203) 222-3110

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rlaplaca@verrill-law.com http://www.verrill-law.com/robert-laplaca/ http://www.verrill-law.com/you-might-be-a-winner





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### **EXHIBIT 13**

FILED: NEW YORK COUNTY CLERK 01/28/2021 04:07 PM INDEX NO. 650652/2021

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SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK COUNTY OF NEW YORK

TELLAS LTD.,

Index No. \_\_\_\_

Plaintiff,

NINETY-FIVE MADISON COMPANY, LP

-against-

Defendant.

**SUMMONS WITH NOTICE** 

Date Index No. Purchased:

To the above-named defendant:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to appear in this action by serving a notice of appearance on the Plaintiff at the address of its counsel set forth below within 20 days after the service of this Summons (not counting the day of service itself), or within 30 days after service is complete if the summons is not delivered personally to you within the State of New York.

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT should you fail to answer or appear, a judgment will be entered against you by default for the relief demanded below.

Dated: New York, New York January 28, 2021

OLSHAN FROME WOLOSKY LLP

By: /s/ Jeremy M. King

Jeremy M. King Khasim K. Lockhart Attorneys for Plaintiff 1325 Avenue of the Americas New York, New York 10019 (212) 451-2300

Declaration of Karen Stein Pg 253 of 254

#### **NOTICE**

#### The nature of the action is:

Plaintiff TellaS Ltd. ("TellaS" or "Plaintiff") is a New Jersey limited company. Defendant Ninety-Five Madison Company, LP ("Ninety-Five Madison" or "Defendant") is a domestic limited partnership.

On May 27, 2008, TellaS and Ninety-Five Madison entered into an 11-year lease agreement (the "Lease Agreement") whereby Ninety-Five Madison served as landlord and TellaS served as tenant for the premises located at 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor (the "Premises"). As reflected in Section 32 of the Lease Agreement, TellaS submitted a \$239,094.96 security deposit (the "Security Deposit") upon entering into the Lease Agreement. TellaS was also required to install bathrooms on the Premises, subject to Ninety-Five Madison's prior written consent (the "Bathroom Renovations"). Notwithstanding years of requests for, and financial expenditures in anticipation of, Ninety-Five Madison's written consent to install bathrooms on the Premises, Ninety-Five Madison withheld its consent for the entire duration of the Lease Agreement. Upon termination of the Lease Agreement, Ninety-Five Madison failed to return the Security Deposit, as required under Section 32 of the Lease Agreement.

Beginning in June of 2019, TellaS made the first of numerous demands upon Ninety-Five Madison for the return of the Security Deposit. Most recently, TellaS, via counsel, served legal demand letters upon Ninety-Five Madison between December 30, 2020 and January 12, 2021, demanding the release of the Security Deposit. Despite TellaS's demands, Ninety-Five Madison continues to withhold the Security Deposit, thus in breach of Section 32 of the Lease Agreement.

At present, the balance owed to TellaS pursuant to the Lease Agreement is at least USD \$264,080.39, which reflects the interest earned on the Security Deposit as of December 31, 2019. Despite TellaS's efforts, the balance of monies owed to TellaS remains unpaid. As such, Defendant is liable for, inter alia, the Security Deposit amount of USD \$264,080.39 plus prejudgment and post-judgment interest from the date the monies were due until paid in full. TellaS is also entitled to its fees incurred in connection with the failed Bathroom Renovations due to Ninety-Five Madison's unreasonable withholding of consent.

Plaintiff designates the place of trial as New York County. The basis of venue is Defendant's residence and the county in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred. Venue is also proper pursuant to Section 74 of the Lease Agreement.

If you do not appear within the applicable time limitation stated above, a judgment will be entered against you by default for the sum of \$264,080.39, with interest from the date of January 1, 2020 and the costs expended by TellaS in connection with the Bathroom Renovations.

#### The relief sought is:

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Plaintiff seeks judgment in its favor (a) awarding monetary damages in an amount to be determined at trial but which exceeds the jurisdictional limits as a result of Defendant's breach of the Lease Agreement, breach of the covenant of good faith and fair dealing, and/or unjust enrichment; (b) awarding prejudgment and post-judgment interest; and (c) awarding such other and further relief to Plaintiff that the Court determines to be just and proper.